

King, Queen leave to U.K.

AMMAN (Petra) — Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor Wednesday left for London on a private visit. King Hussein and Queen Noor were seen off by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, several Princes, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and Royal Court Chief Fayed Tarawneh. Prince Hassan was sworn in as Regent during the King's absence.



Three Jordanian prisoners return from Kuwait

AMMAN (Petra) — Three more Jordanians who were recently released from Kuwaiti prisons arrived back home on Tuesday, bringing to 13 the number of Jordanians that have returned to the Kingdom. The three were pardoned on April 27 under a decree pardoning the Jordanian prisoners, who were serving 15-year prison terms on charges of aiding the Iraqi forces during their occupation of the emirate.

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Addressing members of three authorities:

King stresses that objectives of peace process will prevail 'Netanyahu has no respect for the Palestinians and no commitment to the resolutions and agreements signed'

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein on Wednesday said that peace will prevail in the region despite the Israeli government's disrespect for the Palestinians and its arrogance towards the U.S., which will only turn the world against the Jewish state.

King Hussein told members of the legislative, executive and judicial authorities — gathered at the Royal Court for a wide-ranging meeting on the future course of the Kingdom and the region — that "the peace process will continue, and, with God's help, achieve its purpose and objectives of just, honourable and lasting peace."

The King said the 14-month stalemate in the peace process showed that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has no "respect for the Palestinians and no commitment to the resolutions and agreements signed, such as U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338, and the Oslo and Hebron accords."

The U.S. shared Jordan's views on Israel's attitude towards peace and interna-

tional law, the King said in his 45-minute speech.

The King slammed a threat by Mr. Netanyahu, reported by the Israeli press on Monday, that he will "set Washington on fire" if U.S. President Bill Clinton blames Tel Aviv for the protracted deadlock on the Palestinian-Israeli track.

"I believe that the last time that Washington was on fire was during the revolution against the British colonial power, when British troops burnt down the White House," the King noted, reminding Israel that the U.S. have provided [the Jewish state] with weapons and funds.

The King also criticised Mr. Netanyahu's threat to exclude the European Union from the peace process if it continues to describe the Palestinian territories as occupied land.

In the past, the King noted, Arabs "provoked the world, and the world turned against us."

"I believe the picture has changed now, and the opposite is happening," he said.

The King called on all Palestinians to stay united behind Palestinian President

Yasser Arafat, "because any division, God forbid, constitutes a weakness and cause harm and disaster that might befall the Palestinians, and us as well."

The Palestinians have accepted a U.S. proposal for an Israeli withdrawal from a further 13 per cent of the West

"It is left to each individual to take a decision on this matter, and those who do not want to normalise relations with Israel are free to do so."

Islamists and leftists have boycotted last November's general elections in protest against the peace treaty and normalisation. The King how-

The King went on to outline the shortcomings as well as the achievements of the three authorities of the state and urged a new era of cooperation and understanding between government and opposition.

"In my view, our march is slow and it will not achieve the aspired purpose if we continue to follow the same pattern," the King said.

The King urged more "coordination between the legislative authority — which plans and designs — and the executive authority."

"I look forward to seeing dialogue taking place about every law and I hope we can enlist the help of the judicial authority so that no draft law can reach the Lower House until it has been fully studied and is convincing and meets all conditions."

Controversial amendments to the 1993 Press and Publications Law introduced by the government in May 1997 were annulled in January as unconstitutional

(Continued on page 7)



His Majesty King Hussein addresses members of the executive, legislative and judicial authorities after a luncheon banquet on Wednesday (photo by Youssef Allam)

'Our march will not achieve aspired purpose if we continue to follow same path'

Bank, but Mr. Netanyahu rejected it as a threat to his country's security.

Reiterating Jordan's full support for the Palestinians, the King tackled the issue of normalisation of ties with Israel — a thorn in the flesh in relations between the government and the opposition since Jordan signed the 1994 peace treaty with Israel.

Addressing opposition deputies present at the Royal Court gathering, the King called for tolerance and social peace.

ever urged the opposition to respect the will of the majority, "who are fed up with wars, bloodshed and losses, and with living day by day, without knowing the fate of their children or the destiny of the future generations."

"I believe that any commitment accepted by the majority and constitutionally endorsed becomes binding and should be protected."

"Any tampering with it would open the doors for others to tamper with other matters," the King warned.

Singapore rejects Netanyahu visit

U.S.: Day is not far before going public on reasons behind failure of peace proposals Excluding Israel from plans, Veldrine says it is impossible to convoke a peace conference with Netanyahu's participation

Combined agency dispatches

WITH EFFORTS to end the 14-month deadlock in the peace process with the Palestinians at a near dead end, Israel faced growing impatience Wednesday from the United States and Europe.

"America is angry, Europe attacks us and Singapore stifles us," ran the headline of the daily Maariv after Singapore refused to welcome a proposed visit by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, citing his hard-line stance in the peace process.

Washington, meanwhile, after talks last week between Mr. Netanyahu and U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright brought no breakthrough, repeated threats to drop its mediation efforts and blamed Israel for the failure.

U.S. State Department

spokesman James Rubin warned that "the day is not far" when the United States would have to publicly explain the failure of its proposals to break the deadlock, which Mr. Netanyahu has repeatedly rejected.

Israeli Public Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani bristled at the warnings from Washington. "This is back to psychological warfare. These are attempts to pressure Israel," he said.

Israel also faced pressure from the European Union (EU), which has threatened to exclude products made in Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golan Heights from tariff breaks given to Israeli products.

The council of ministers of the European Commission is to debate the sanctions on June 8, European diplomatic sources here said (see feature on page 12).

Undaunted by growing

international isolation, Mr. Netanyahu has assured his right-wing government that he will continue to reject U.S. proposals that he conduct a troop withdrawal from another 13 per cent of the West Bank.

After the flurry of meetings with Ms. Albright last week seemingly hit a dead end over Mr. Netanyahu's rejection, the United States has not announced plans for resumed contacts, not even a new mission by its Middle East envoy, Dennis Ross.

Talks, however, were scheduled for Thursday between Ms. Albright and Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Sharaa, making a brief stop in the United States on his way back to Damascus from a conference in Colombia, the Washington Post reported on Wednesday.

The Post said the U.S. State Department confirmed the meeting, although it had not been

officially announced. It quoted a diplomat as saying the meeting had been initiated by the Syrians. It also said the U.S. State Department had informed the Israeli embassy about the talks.

Mr. Netanyahu, meanwhile, took the offensive against Europe, warning that sanctions against settlement-made products "would severely hurt relations between Europe and Israel and put an end to Europe's attempts to play a role in the peace process."

"If Europe doesn't care about the unemployment which [sanctions] would cause, then we have no reason to care about reducing unemployment among the Palestinians," he said.

Some 15,000 Palestinians hold jobs in Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, according to Israeli statistics.

Mr. Netanyahu's diplo-

(Continued on page 7)

Israel orders renovation at Al Aqsa stopped

TEL AVIV (AP) — In a new showdown over Islam's third holiest shrine, Israel's police minister on Wednesday ordered renovations of a vault underneath Al Aqsa Mosque to be stopped.

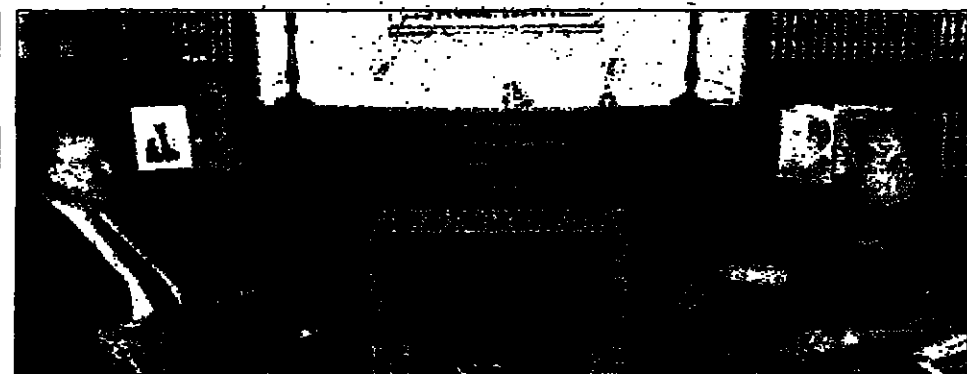
Muslim officials complained temporarily, but said they would resume work soon and that Israel had no right to intervene.

The 11-acre walled platform is the most sensitive spot in the Israeli-Arab conflict, and both Muslims and Jews closely watch for any changes introduced by the other side.

In September 1996, Israel's opening of an archaeological tunnel along the compound triggered Israeli-Palestinian clashes in which 80 people were killed.

At issue in the latest dispute is a dark, dank vault below Al Aqsa Mosque that is used as a prayer area during busy times, such as Friday, the Muslim day of rest, and the Holy Month of Ramadan. The vault holds

(Continued on page 7)



Crown Prince receives Shaath

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Wednesday stressed Jordan's full and unwavering support for the Palestinians in their endeavours to regain their legitimate rights and establish an independent state on Palestinian national soil.

Prince Hassan, speaking after an audience at the Royal Court with the Palestinian Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Nabil Shaath, called for every possible effort to be made to ensure an end to the stalled peace process, by respecting and implementing all agreements reached.

Prince Hassan and Dr. Shaath discussed means to further develop bilateral relations, stressing the importance of cooperation and coordination between Jordan and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) on the Bethlehem project, which will include tourist and cultural programmes. The project will be implemented in the year 2000 to mark the second millennium after the birth of Christ.

The meeting was attended by Royal Court Chief Fayed Tarawneh and Deputy Prime Minister for Development Affairs and Foreign Minister Jawad Anani.

Shbeilat insists on appeal

AMMAN (J.T.) — Laith Shbeilat, who was pardoned by His Majesty King Hussein on Monday, yesterday shunned the pardon and conditioned making the news of his refusal public on the release of all prisoners who were included in a 1996 general amnesty, whom, according to him, remain imprisoned.

"I was taken by surprise by what I read in newspapers this morning [Tuesday] that I have been pardoned," Mr. Shbeilat said in a letter to the Swaga prison warden where he is being held since he was sentenced to nine-month imprisonment by the State Security Court on May 13.

King Hussein ordered Mr. Shbeilat's release during a sur-

prise visit to the professional union's complex on Monday.

"The Shbeilat affair is over, with his colleagues as guarantors for him," the King told reporters following the conclusion of the meeting with professional union presidents.

But Mr. Shbeilat said in the letter, released by the

(Continued on page 7)

Flowers, wine on path to trade fraud brawl between European Union and Israel

By Douglas Hamilton Reuters

BRUSSELS — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sharply raised the stakes on Tuesday in a row with the European Union (EU) over alleged trade fraud, but EU officials said his broadside would not make them bend EU rules.

Mr. Netanyahu said any European move aimed at stopping what Brussels says looks like export fraud "will put an end to any attempt of the European Union to have any kind of facilitating role in the peace process."

"It will immediately tell us that the European Union is not in fact a facilitator of equal standing and equal sympathies, but in fact is a one-sided player," he told a conference of financial analysts in Tel Aviv.

He also warned that Israeli businesses damaged by EU action would not be obliged to continue employing Palestinian labour.

In Brussels, European Commission (EC) sources said they were not surprised by Mr. Netanyahu's hard-line position and insisted the timing of their complaint had everything to do with alleged fraud and nothing

to do with stalled peace talks.

"Any time of the year is a hard time to say to the Israelis that anything at all might be wrong in their country," a commission source commented. "They always accuse us of systematic harassment to put pressure on their government."

The EC, the executive arm of the 15-member bloc, said last week that the EU should stop any imports from Israeli settlements in the occupied territories which benefited illegally from trade privileges granted to Israel proper.

It says traders have complained that preferential-tariff

imports supposedly from Israel actually contain goods from the West Bank and Gaza, Arab east Jerusalem and the Golan Heights.

"This is neither a boycott nor a sanction," a commission spokesman said on Tuesday. "It's just a simple implementation of the trade agreement... Agreements need to be respected and Israel cannot be made an exception."

He said the EC had a legal obligation to police EU trade agreements with outside states and to prevent traders making fraudulent profits from diverting goods.

Israeli diplomatic sources in the EU capital said that was nonsense. "This is pure politics and they know it," said one.

Israel believes the EU is simply trying to use economic leverage to punish the Netanyahu government for the stalemate in the Middle East peace process, as Palestinian President Yasser Arafat urged EU leaders to do last week.

A commission source noted that Israel had tried to make a political issue of a row with the EU last year over orange juice, when the EC complained that juice entering EU markets under the zero duty trade rules

was mostly from Brazil. Israel had subsequently withdrawn two-thirds of orange juice certificates of origin, he said. A commission document put the loss to the EU budget at about \$44 million.

No figure has been given for estimated losses in the latest alleged cases of fraud, involving goods from various economic sectors. Officials declined to give details but cut flowers and "wine from the Golan Heights" were mentioned by one source.

In addition to passing off products from Israeli settlements as produce of Israel,

Israeli traders were also using their power to force Palestinians to sell to them instead of directly to the EU export market, the sources said.

Under the pretext of security, Palestinian exports of goods such as cut flowers could be delayed and damaged, unless they pass through an Israeli middleman, they said.

"Last year, Israel filled its entire quota of cut flowers to the EU while the Palestinians only did 10 per cent of theirs," a commission source said. "This is a perverse system that uses forced intermediaries. Those who don't play are blacklisted."

Foreign ministers of the EU, which does not recognise Israeli claims to the occupied territories, were due to discuss the issue at a regular meeting in Brussels next Monday.

In Britain, which currently holds the EU's rotating presidency, a government official said the commission's views were not necessarily those of the EU member states.

"The council will consider it and in due course may or may not adopt the conclusions. It is too early to say... there is not necessarily going to be a decision [on May 25]," he said.

No Saudi mediation between U.S., Iran — minister

DUBAI (R) — Saudi Defence Minister Prince Sultan Ben Abdul Aziz said in comments published on Wednesday that Saudi Arabia was not mediating between Iran and the United States.

The London-based Saudi newspapers Asharq Al Awsat and Al Hayat also quoted Prince Sultan as telling reporters in the northern Saudi town of Tabuk that the kingdom's relations with its non-Arab Gulf neighbour were improving.

Asked to comment on reports that Saudi Arabia had told U.S. Vice President Al Gore earlier this month it was willing to mediate between Washington and Tehran, Prince Sultan said: "On Saudi Arabia's relations with Iran, I cannot say they are at their best but they are heading to the better." Asharq Al Awsat quoted the prince as saying.

Riyadh says working to lift U.N. sanctions on Iraq

RIYADH (AFP) — Saudi Arabia is working for a lifting of the U.N. sanctions on Iraq but its President, Saddam Hussein, must first implement all U.N. Security Council resolutions, the Saudi defence minister said. "We are still working for the lifting of the embargo on the brotherly Iraqi people but we hope the leader of Iraq will manage to implement all the Security Council resolutions," said Prince Sultan Ben Abdul Aziz. "We do not accept these sanctions but there is nothing we can do," he told a press conference late Tuesday in Tabuk, in the northwest of the Gulf Arab kingdom. Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Sa'id Al Sahhaf has said Baghdad is working to restore ties with Riyadh that were severed during the 1991 Gulf war and has proposed opening interests sections. "Saudi Arabia has not rejected the Iraqi offer but it has not taken a decision to implement it," he said.

"Therefore, the visit of the American vice president had no influence on us and there are no Saudi mediations between America and Iran at all," he said. Saudi-owned newspapers, including Asharq Al Awsat, said earlier this month that

Saudi Arabia told Mr. Gore that Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al Faisal was ready to convey Washington's views to Iran during his forthcoming visit to Tehran. Saudi newspapers said Prince Saud would visit Tehran on May 26 and 27.



Prisoners of war from the Sudanese army Wednesday are guarded by SPLA rebels after having been captured during heavy fighting over the Wadega garrison, which later fell to the rebels. The SPLA claim they have taken several garrisons and have added an additional 7,000 square kilometres to their territory during a recent offensive within the northern Blue Nile Province (Reuters photo)

First public executions in 15 years spark criticism in Lebanon

BEIRUT (AP) — The grisly public executions of two men in Lebanon triggered on Wednesday extensive media criticism of the government as well as the death penalty that was reintroduced four years ago.

Convicted murderers Wisam Nayef Issa, 26, and Hassan Nada Abu Jabal, 25, were hanged at dawn Tuesday in front of the municipality building in the coastal town of Tabarjah amid cheers by hundreds of spectators and protests by human rights activists.

Although local anger against the young convicts was apparent, the spectacle of their hangings — broadcast later on television — touched a raw nerve among Lebanese, whose 15-year civil war until 1990 had claimed 150,000 lives.

"By returning to a form of punishment which is medieval in concept and panders to the worst in human nature, Lebanon has taken a step backwards," the independent Daily Star newspaper wrote in an editorial Wednesday.

A rare voice supporting the executions came from Samir Attallah, a Lebanese columnist in the pan-Arab Asharq Al Awsat newspaper. He wrote that "sorrow is the right of the innocent, not the criminals." Before Tuesday, 12 people had been executed in Lebanon since the government brought back the death penalty in April 1994 to stem the post-civil-war crime. But all executions were inside prisons or government buildings.

To add to the shock of the first public execution since 1983, television viewers across the nation saw the executioner pull the bodies down with his hands to help tighten the noose. The men were left dangling from the gallows for 40 minutes without hoods.

Even pirates had "the decency and sensitivity" to provide their victims hoods, the Daily Star said.

The two were convicted of murdering a man and his half sister while robbing their home in 1995. Lebanese President Elias Hrawi rejected appeals from the convicts' families to commute the sentences.

Hundreds of people watched the hanging from the town square and from balconies in Tabarjah, the northern town where the crime was committed. Some clapped and cheered "Long live justice" while others shouted "Long Live Hrawi." Members of a local human rights group hoisted a banner that said: "We mourn the death of the victims of the crime and the victims of the execution."

Several members of the Lebanese parliament have sought an amendment to the death penalty law to strengthen the appeals process and limit death sentences to premeditated murder. Tuesday's executions may help their cause.

"What sadism is this that we are witnessing, once in murder... and once in watching murderers?" wrote a reporter for the leading Al Nahar newspaper.

"What next? The rack? Burning at the stake? Hanging, drawing and quartering? Selling tickets to raise money to reduce the public debt?" the Daily Star asked.

Sudan extends polling in constitutional referendum

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Sudanese voters have been given an additional 24 hours to cast ballots in a controversial constitutional referendum that opened on May 1, official newspapers reported Wednesday.

Voting in Khartoum state, originally set to end Tuesday, has been extended to Wednesday evening, while voting in south and central Sudan has been extended to Monday, elections commission chief Abdul Munim Al Zaini Al Nahas said in a statement carried in the Khartoum press.

He said the extension, from an original deadline of Wednesday, had been granted at the request of local authorities in eight states for reasons of security, transportation difficulties and adverse weather

across Africa's largest country, wracked by civil war and famine.

Ten million Sudanese are registered to vote in the poll on the draft constitution, which is controversial because it contains ambiguities over political and religious freedom.

The referendum has been called by the military regime of President Omar Bashir, which is backed by politicians of the theoretically banned National Islamic Front (NIF). Some Muslims argue that the draft text opens too much leeway for free parties, others contend that the NIF itself has become a broad national movement embracing all trends in the country.

The text itself uses a rare Arabic word, *tawfiq*, for provisions on free political, cultural and professional "affiliation," but does not specify whether political parties as such will be allowed for the first time since the junta came to power.

Southern rebels of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and their allies in the northern political opposition, which includes exiled members of parties scrapped after a 1989 military coup, have called on voters to boycott the vote.

Greek-Cyprus air defence exercise starts in Cyprus

NICOSIA (R) — Joint Greek and Cypriot air defence exercises started on the divided island of Cyprus on Wednesday, military sources in Nicosia said.

"They started today and will continue for two and a half days. We are not giving out any more information for security reasons," a defence source told Reuters.

The Greek-Cypriot daily Simerini reported that the Greek air force would use an air base recently completed in the western region of Paphos as a launch pad for the exercise.

Aircraft participating in the exercise, code-named "Toxotis," will attack mock targets in Cyprus and over the sea, Simerini reported.

The Cyprus defence ministry said it would not give details of the exercise, but would issue a statement when it had finished.

The Greek-Cypriot-led government of Cyprus has a defence pact with Greece, its closest ally, and joint military exercises take place about twice a year.

Under the terms of the pact,

Greece would "assist" in Cyprus aid in the event of an attack by Turkey, which has some 30,000 troops in the north of the divided island.

Cyprus's Greek and Turkish communities have been separated since Turkey's 1974 invasion of north Cyprus, following a brief Greek-inspired coup.

Efforts to reunite the island as a federation have failed nowhere and the situation remains a significant source of tension between Greece and Turkey, partners in NATO but also bitter rivals.

Three Kurdish rebels surrender to Turkish embassy in Beirut

ANKARA (AFP) — Three leading members of the separatist Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) have surrendered to Turkey's embassy in the Lebanese capital of Beirut, the state-run Anatolia News Agency (ANA) said Wednesday.

The three PKK members, who turned themselves in to the embassy on Monday, will be brought to Turkey on Thursday, ANA quoted Turkish intelligence officials as saying.

The agency did not specify the identities of those who had reportedly surrendered in what is believed to be the first such action by PKK members at a Turkish diplomatic mission abroad.

Turkey claims that the PKK, which has been waging a separatist war in the country's southeast since 1984, has military bases in Lebanon's Syrian-controlled Bekaa valley.

A former top commander of the PKK quit the group and

surrendered to a pro-Turkish Iraqi Kurdish faction in northern Iraq in March after a dispute with PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan.

Semdin Sakik, the ex-commander of PKK forces in southeastern Turkey, was brought to the Turkish territory last month.

"Defections from the PKK indicate a process of disintegration in the terrorist group," a Turkish intelligence official told ANA.

Saudi paper blasts U.S. stand against 'Islamic nuclear deterrent'

RIYADH (AFP) — A Saudi newspaper on Wednesday accused the United States of pressuring Pakistan not to carry out its own nuclear tests in reaction to India's underground blasts only because it is a Muslim country.

"The most vile aspect of U.S. policy is shown up by its threat to impose sanctions on Pakistan if it carries out nuclear tests," said Al Riyadh.

"The U.S. position toward Pakistan is in keeping with its strategy, dictated by Israel, toward the Islamic World," it said.

Referring to nuclear bombs, the newspaper condemned "the hostility of Washington to the idea of such arms being in the possession of any Islamic country."

It warned of "the danger which Israel, India and probably Turkey could represent for the Arab-Muslim world in the future."

"It is the duty of Muslims to support Pakistan, which could become the first Islamic deterrent force," said Al Riyadh.

Turkey waits for EU to eliminate Greek hurdles

ANKARA (AP) — Turkey said Wednesday it would wait for signs that the European Union (EU) can bring Greece around before agreeing to attend a special Turkey-EU meeting next week.

The statement followed Tuesday's visit by British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, who came in a bid to convince Turkey to attend the May 25 meeting.

"We need to see a clearer picture of how the European Union can fulfil its pledges," Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesman Necati Utkan told reporters. "The uncertainty remains."

Relations between Turkey and the EU have been strained since the 15-nation group rejected Turkey's application for membership in December.

The EU wants to get relations going again. Its strategy foresees new financial assistance to Turkey, as EU-member Greece, which has long-standing disputes with Ankara, has steadfastly blocked past EU funds earmarked for Turkey.

Mr. Cook, whose country holds the rotating EU presidency, told Turkish officials he would push for a formula for closer ties with Turkey that could side-step Greece.

"We have been told that the EU would act on behalf of 14 countries, if not 15," Mr. Utkan said.

It was not clear how successful the EU, where all decisions are taken by consensus, would be in side-stepping Greece. The Anatolia news agency quoted Greek Ambassador Dimitrios Nezeritis on Wednesday as saying that the "EU system does not allow such a thing."

Greece has vetoed some \$400 million in EU aid, which is supposed to help Turkey be more competitive and offset losses from a 1995 customs deal with the EU that eliminated some trade barriers.

"We are not concerned about the amount of money. But the money has a symbolic importance," Mr. Utkan said.

JORDAN TELEVISION

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PROGRAMME TWO

Thursday Programmes
15:10 Cartoon — Dinky Dis
15:30 Cartoon — The Animal Park
16:00 L'Ecole des Fans
16:30 Doc — Blue Water Dreaming
17:00 N.B.A.
18:00 Science fiction — Slider
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Science Magazine
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Big Brother Jake
20:00 Doc — The Great Romances
20:30 Drama — Dr. Quinn the Medicine Woman
21:20 The Oprah Winfrey Show
22:00 News in English
22:30 Feature film: "Pay Back"
00:15 Comedy — Can't Hurry Love
00:50 End of T.X.

Friday Programmes

15:10 Cartoon — The Adventures of Teddy Ruxpin
15:30 Cartoon — Wishbone
16:00 He Shoots, He Scores
16:30 Tarzan
17:30 French Programme — Game Show
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 French Programme — Allo la Terre
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air"
20:00 Documentary — Life on the Internet

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

20:30 Doc. — The Brain	Tel. 4637440	Amman 26, Aqaba 35	Highway Police.....843402	Al-Bashir.....775111/26	09:15.....Samsa
21:10.....Drama: "Babylon-5"	Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138	Humidity readings: Amman 34 per cent, Aqaba 36 per cent.	Traffic Police.....896390	Army, Marka.....891611/15	09:45.....New Delhi
22:00.....News in English	Church of Presentation, Sweifeh Tel. 5920146		Public Security Dept.....4630321	Queen Alia Hospital 5602240/50	10:00.....Bombay
22:30 Mini-series: Melissa (Pt.1)	The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757		Hotel Complaints.....5605800	Amal Hospital.....5674155	10:05.....Dhahran, Riyadh
23:59.....End of T.X.	The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190		Price Complaints.....5661176	ZARQA:	10:25.....Beirut
	Evangelical Free Church Tel. 892679		Water & Sewage Complaints 897467	Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323	10:40.....Muscat, Dubai
	The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052		Amman Municipality Complaints.....787111	Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560	10:50.....Doha, Bahrain
	The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331		Telephone Information (directory assistance).....121	Ibn Sina Hospital.....(09)986732	11:00.....Colombo
	The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261		Overseas Calls.....010230	Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990	15:35.....New York, Amsterdam
			Central Amman Telephone Repairs.....4623101	IRBID:	18:45.....Kuwait
			Abdali Tel. Repairs.....5661101	Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555	19:00.....London, Athens
			Jordan Television.....773111	Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275	19:20.....Bangkok, Calcutta
			Radio Jordan.....774111	Ibn Al Nafees Hospital (02)347100	20:30.....Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain
			Water Authority.....5680100	AQABA:	20:40.....Moscow
			J. Electricity Authority.....815615	Princess Haya Hospital (03)34111	23:55.....Larnaca
			Electric Power Co.....4636381		04:50.....New Delhi (add)
			RJ Flight Information.....44-53200		
			Queen Alia Int. Airport ..44-53200		

QAIA on Thursday only (RW)

23:25 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

06:45 Beirut (RJ)
11:00 Moscow (RJ)
12:15 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
12:15 Abu Dhabi, Al Ain (RJ)
12:20 Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
12:45 Kuwait (RJ)
13:00 Athens, Paris (RJ)
13:20 London (RJ)
20:35 Larnaca (RJ)
22:00 New Delhi (add) (RJ)
22:15 Cairo (RJ)
22:30 Jeddah (RJ)
00:30 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)

Other Flights

06:15 Istanbul (TK)
07:00 Frankfurt (LH)
08:20 London (BA)
08:45 Beirut (ME)
14:30 Riyadh (SV)
16:00 Abu Dhabi (GF)
16:30 Doha (QR)
17:00 Damascus, Dubai (EK)
21:10 Tel Aviv (LY)
22:10 Cairo (MS)
02:15 Amsterdam (KL)
04:00 Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW)

(For Thursday and Friday)

10:20 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA and proceeding to Marka Airport) (RW)
20:20 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA on Friday only) (RW)
22:35 Tel Aviv (arriving at

Home

Jordan, German companies sign two wastewater projects

By Ahmad Khalib
Special to Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Water Authority of Jordan (WAJ) and two German companies signed two wastewater projects worth over \$240 million for projects to construct a wastewater pipeline from Amman to Rasheed and to repair and connect Amman's wastewater treatment plant with the Rasheed plant.

The agreements were signed at the Ministry of Municipalities and Urban Planning.

The first project, worth \$100 million, includes excavating a tunnel that will lead to Rasheed, in addition to reconstructing wastewater pipes along the tunnel.

The second project, to be completed at the cost of JD90 million, aims to increase the capacity of the Amman Rasheed Water Sewerage Project (ARWSP) to 300,000 cubic metres per day.

Eighty per cent of the funds will be supplied in the form of loans by the German Development Bank (GIZ). The remaining 20 per cent will be provided by the Water Authority.

German firms were awarded the first project. A Jordanian firm and a German company will carry out the second project.

WAJ recently signed a \$1 billion agreement with Germany to enhance capacity of the Amman Rasheed plant to 165,000 cubic metres per day.

The three projects follow a German-Jordan study that aims to determine necessary steps to cover the Greater Amman area toward Amman.

The rehabilitation of a 15-year-old wastewater line between Amman and Rasheed, which was part of the project, was completed in 1995.

"We are not concerned about the amount of money. But the money has a symbolic importance," Mr. Utkan said.

What's going on

FILMS

"The Last of the Mohicans" about Mexican army

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Jordan, German companies sign two contracts for wastewater projects

By Ahmad Khatib
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Water Authority of Jordan (WAO) and two German companies on Wednesday signed two contracts worth over JD40 million for projects to construct a wastewater pipeline from Ain Ghazal to Ruseifah and to repair another connecting Ain Ghazal's wastewater treatment plant with the Khirbet Al Samra treatment plant.

The agreements were signed at the ministry by Minister of Water and Irrigation Munther Haddadin and a representative from one of the companies. Also attending the signing ceremony were the German Ambassador to Jordan Peter Mende, a representative of the German Development Bank and WAO Secretary General Munther Khleifat.

The first project, worth JD10 million, includes excavating a tunnel that will hold the pipelines, in addition to constructing secondary routes leading to the tunnel.

The second project, to be carried out at the cost of JD30 million, aims to increase the carrying capacity of the Ain Ghazal-Khirbet Al Samra line by the year 2025. It includes building operational tanks, valves, and other necessary equipment and increasing the line's capacity to 306,000 cubic metres per day.

Eighty per cent of the funding will be supplied in the form of soft loans by the German Development Bank, while 20 per cent will be provided from the Water Authority's budget.

Two German firms were awarded the first project, while a Jordanian firm and a German company will carry out the second contract.

The WAO recently signed a JD1 million agreement with Germany in order to enhance the capacity of the Ain Ghazal treatment plant to 165,000 cubic metres per day.

The three projects follow a Jordanian-German study that aimed to determine necessary services to cover the Greater Amman area toward Ain Ghazal. The rehabilitation of the 13-year-old wastewater pipeline between Ain Ghazal and Khirbet Al Samra was another project cited in the study.



CHILEAN AMBASSADOR PRESENTS CREDENTIALS: Foreign Minister Jawad Anani Wednesday receives a copy of the credentials of the newly-appointed Chilean ambassador to Jordan, Claudio Ferri (Petra photo)

Jordan may request extradition of suspect in U.S. — official

By Amy Henderson
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A government official yesterday said Jordan was prepared to seek the extradition of a Jordanian residing in the United States if and when ongoing investigations link him to a spate of recent bombings and arson in Amman targeting several former high-ranking Jordanian officials.

"We have not formally requested extradition," the official told the Jordan Times. "We do have an extradition treaty with the United States, so if and when we establish a link between this person, the group and the crimes, we will, of course, request extradition."

The U.S. embassy in Amman reiterated yesterday

that the U.S. considers the extradition treaty with Jordan binding and "would honour its obligations to Jordan should it receive such a request." Jordan and the U.S. signed an extradition treaty in 1995 after the U.S. asked Jordan to extradite Mohammad Ismail Absuqa, a naturalised American citizen who fled to Jordan with his two children after killing his wife in New Jersey in 1994.

Arabic press reports have stated that investigators suspect Majid Tala' Hajji, a Jordanian residing in the U.S. with a green card, as having funded the Al Islah and Tahadi (Reform and Challenge) group, responsible for plotting "terrorist" attacks against Jordanian security symbols in March and April.

Arabic dailies have also

reported that officials are focusing investigations on an Arab seeking political asylum in Britain. Jordan does not have an extradition treaty with the United Kingdom, but the official said that should Jordan again establish a connection, it might request extradition.

Eight suspects arrested earlier this month allegedly admitted to a total of five different attacks: the arson of cars belonging to a former intelligence chief and a former interior minister, a fire bombing at the American School in Amman, a traffic police compound and the parking lot of the Jerusalem Hotel, also in Amman.

Last week, police arrested Egyptian national Abdul Nasser Abu Shanab, whom they suspect of heading the group.

Pharmacists' association examining plans to ensure members' safety

By Mohammad Ben Husein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Jordan Pharmacists' Association (JPA) is considering two major plans to protect its members after a spate of attacks on pharmacies across the Kingdom blamed by officials on drug addicts.

"Two proposals are being studied by the association," JPA President Abdul Rahim Issa told the Jordan Times on Wednesday.

"The first entails hiring bodyguards in cooperation with Jordan Economic and Social Organisation of Retired Servicemen and the second is installing video cameras inside pharmacies," he added.

"By the end of May, the association will decide on

which proposal to implement."

The general assembly of pharmacy owners, part of the JPA, had turned down a proposal by some association members to limit the sale of certain drugs and narcotics to several pharmacies, which in turn would be provided with better security measures.

The JPA attempts to protect members follow repeated requests for the government to ensure better protection to pharmacies through more regular police patrols in the areas around drug stores, especially in remote places.

According to Ministry of Health regulations, several types of narcotics and drugs, including anti-depressants and sleeping pills, cannot be sold without a doctor's prescription.

In February, one pharmacist was slain and another seriously injured after an assault against them widely believed to be related to drugs.

Police reported that the two attacks were carried out by the same person after tests by the criminal lab showed that the bullets fired came from the same gun.

Three years ago, Jordan was rocked by the murder of three pharmacists in separate attacks. No arrests have been made in connection with the 1995 crimes.

In March, hundreds of pharmacists took to the streets in Amman in protest against the February attacks and asked the government to take extra measures to ensure their safety.

Nationwide petition campaign to raise legal marriage age planned

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordanian women plan to launch a nationwide petition campaign soon to back their demands to raise the legal marriage age to 18 following a recommendation at the conclusion of a two-day workshop entitled "Marriage Age."

Current Jordanian legislation allows females to marry at the age of 15 and men at the age of 16, a factor sociologists blame for the rising divorce rate in Jordan.

Recent studies have indicated that early marriages are among the leading causes of divorce. The reports stated that 86 per cent of divorces occur among couples who married before reaching the age of 21.

Furthermore, it said many women who marry early are forced to quit school, thus depriving them of their basic right to education.

In addition to the call for

raising the marriage age, the 140 participants, representing women activists, religious leaders, sociologists and representatives of government and non-governmental organisations, also stressed the importance of changing social concepts "which, with this practice of forcing its children into early marriages, deprive them of their right to education."

The recommendations also emphasised the importance of the freedom to choose marriage partners and launching awareness campaigns at schools.

They also suggested a mandatory health test for couples wanting to marry "to determine if they are physically ready for marriage."

"This time, the recommendations will not stay in the drawers, and we will do our best to call for a change in the law and to work on changing the current mentality among families on this issue," said

Nadia Shamroukh, vice president of the Jordanian Women's Union (JWU).

Earlier in the day, Safa Qusoush from the Ministry of Health presented a paper entitled "The Negative Health Effect of Early Marriages on Women," in which she stressed the possible health dangers facing women if they become pregnant before the age of 18.

Also on Wednesday, the JWU released a study on marriage conducted on 1,089 students aged 14-18 at government schools in different parts of the Kingdom.

JWU social worker Afaf Jabiri, who presented the study to the participants, said that when asked if they were willing to marry before finishing school, 354 of the total said yes.

Some reasons the students gave for this answer, according to Ms. Jabiri, included financial motives, pressure from their families due to their

"old" age and to escape from abusive households.

Those who answered in the negative provided reasons stemming from a number of factors, including unstable emotions, desire to continue their education, inability of handling marriage responsibilities and the need to live a healthy childhood, she said.

The social worker said the study revealed that many minors resort to marriage to escape family pressures or problems, avoid social pressures that are exerted against young females and prove themselves and obtain their independence.

The participants heard testimonies of six divorced women who married before the age of 18.

The event was organised by the JWU with the support of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, the Jordanian National Committee for Women and other governmental and non-governmental organisations.

Conference on Arab oil and diplomacy 'unique' in examination of regional issues

AMMAN (J.T.) — The president of the Institute of Diplomacy, Kamel Abu Jaber, Wednesday said the conference on "Arab Oil and Diplomacy: Towards the 21st Century" was a unique event in that it tackled some of the most important outstanding issues concerning the Middle East.

Dr. Abu Jaber said that while it is true the conference did not provide the answers to all questions, it featured two noteworthy points: it was held in a non-oil producing country, which he said was considered a step in the right direction, and it served to direct attention to basic pan-Arab and international affairs.

Dr. Abu Jaber referred to

HRH Crown Prince Hassan's remark during a banquet he hosted for the conference's participants in which he drew attention to the chronic crises in the region and called for a dialogue based on mutual understanding.

The conference, which ended on Tuesday, was based on the importance of oil and other crises facing the region, the policy of dual containment, the continued embargo on Iraq and the double standard policies in the region, in addition to mass destruction weapons and Israel's exclusion from any consensus on this question, he said.

Dr. Abu Jaber stated that the conference also dealt with the

world community's continued silence over Israel's failure to abide by the principle of international legitimacy and U.N. resolutions.

According to Dr. Abu Jaber, the studies presented at the conference showed that the Arab countries' overall national income is no more than one-third of Italy's annual revenues, even though Italy is inhabited by only 57 million people.

Expressing his optimism for the future, Dr. Abu Jaber said: "We are not working from a vacuum but rather we are working in a region that has witnessed only brief periods of peace and stability. It is necessary for us to work for peace

because it is the basic foundation of progress and development."

The conference, organised by the Institute of Diplomacy, focused on long-term issues such as the strategic importance of Arab oil, changes in Arab World order and the need for a fresh perspective on Arab oil and diplomacy.

In an address delivered on his behalf by Senate Speaker Zeid Rifai, Prince Hassan said Arab states with varying national incomes could face future challenges and make better use of opportunities if they were to adopt a comprehensive regional development policy with a common strategic vision.

Preparations under way for seminar on Arab trade, development

AMMAN (Petra) — The Federation of Jordanian Chambers of Commerce (FJCC) and the Arab Union of Food Industries (AUFI) have begun preparations for a regional seminar to be held next month in Amman on trade and development in the Arab World.

According to FJCC chairperson Haidar Murad, the two-day seminar will tackle challenges facing the Arab World such as the global economy, the World Trade Organisation and the drive to create a major Arab free trade zone in ten years.

The seminar will orient merchants and industrialists on world economic and trade developments, their impact on the Arab World and what it can do to meet the challenge of globalisation and open up to international markets, he said.

Mr. Murad, who is also chairperson of the preparatory committee, said the seminar will focus attention on food processing, detergent manufacturing and inter-Arab trade.

The Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply and the Jordan Trade Association will contribute to the seminar, which will be attended by delegates from regional and Arab organisations including the U.N. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the Arab League and the Federation of Arab Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, he added.

Mr. Murad noted that the economic and trade status of Jordan, whose trade with Arab countries accounts for more than 27 per cent of the overall total, will serve as a case study.

The seminar will explore Arab countries' food processing industries, Arab food security, development of the agricultural sector and means of enabling the Arab World to become self-sufficient in food production, he said.



SROUR RECEIVES PALESTINIAN DELEGATION: The speaker of the Lower House of Parliament, Sa'd Hayel Srou, Wednesday receives a visiting delegation from the Palestinian Legislative Council. The delegation later met with Foreign Minister Jawad Anani, who stressed Jordan's support for the Palestinian cause (Petra photo)

Lecture examines alternative means of energy production

By Nadia Mukhlis
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Promoting the use of "biogas" as an environmentally friendly method to produce energy was the main theme of a recent lecture hosted by the Friends of the Environment Society (FOE).

J.B. Singh, executive director of the India-based Action for Food Production (AFPRO), delivered a talk entitled "Biogas use in rural communities," in which he explained that biogas can benefit rural areas dependent on livestock production as a source of energy and a means of controlling desertification.

"The implementation of this method can offer a relatively inexpensive means of energy production for the purpose of cooking," Dr. Singh explained. "The [resulting] rich organic slurry

can be used as a fertiliser, thus enhancing crop production."

The availability of biogas in rural communities can help improve standards of living and help control desertification by providing an alternative to tree-cutting as an inexpensive means of producing energy, he added.

Biogas is produced by fermenting animal manure, such as cow dung, chicken, pig and even human excreta to produce methane gas, which is burnt to provide heat and light. The method also facilitates the recycling of the manure to provide soil nutrients to support plant life, which in turn prevent soil degradation, Dr. Singh said.

A single ton of cow manure, for example, can provide adequate fertilisation for 50 kilograms of grain, which would in turn provide enough food

supply to last a village for four months, Dr. Singh said.

Over his one-week stay in Jordan, Dr. Singh, accompanied by members of FOE, conducted a series of field visits to identify suitable locations to construct biogas plants, Rana Naber, FOE media committee spokesperson said.

AFPRO is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that has played a leading role in promoting the use of biogas on a large scale in India through a network of about 100 NGOs.

Dr. Singh has been instrumental in defining the strategy for the promotion of biogas technology through grassroots organisations in India and has presented papers on biogas technology promotion at seminars and workshops at the international level, Ms. Naber added.

what's going on

FILMS

* Portrait of an Artist (about Mexican artist Frida Kahlo at Darat Al Funun, Jabel Weibdeh on Thursday at 6:00 p.m.

* Spanish film "La casa de Bernarda Alba" at Instituto Cervantes, Jabel Amman on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.

* "Steel Magnolias" at the American Center, Abdoun, on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.

ART EXHIBITION

* Exhibition of personal oil paintings of artist Mohammad Al Hadidi (at his residence), Dahiyat Al Rashid, near Dawahi Hotel (Tel. 5154567).

CONCERTS

* Concert by Rula Talhouni at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

* Musical performance by students of Faza' for Music at the Royal Cultural Centre on Saturday, May 23, at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Works by Christian de Portzamparc at the University of Jordan, until June 4.

* Works by Mohammad Al Lahham at Al Madinah Gallery, Ras Al 'Ain (Tel. 743158), until May 23.

* Paintings by Abdul Aziz Al Hasek at Hammoumab Art Gallery, Gardens St. (Tel. 5536098), until May 26.

* Spring collection of ceramic items and rugs at Beit Al Bawadi showroom, Abdoun (Tel. 592584/5930070), until May 24.

* Photo exhibition "Frederico Garcia Lorca" and book exhibition "Lorca Translated Into Arabic" at Instituto Cervantes, Jabel Amman (Tel. 4610858), until May 25.

* Sculpture Designs by Jewellery Designer Suzanne El Masry and Sculptor Samer Tabba at the American Center, Abdoun, until May 25.

* Paintings by Lebanese-American artist Eiel Adnan entitled "Artist's Book of Art and Poetry" at Darat Al Funun, Jabel Weibdeh, until May 28. Also displaying works by Berlin-based Syrian artist Marwan Bashi entitled "A Suite of Heads," and works by contemporary Arab artists.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Crown Prince attends military graduation

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Crown Prince Hassan attended a special graduation ceremony, Wednesday at the King Hussein Ben Ali Brigade, for military cadets who have completed a training course in basic skills and combat in hilly terrain. Prince Hassan was briefed on the training programme's components and watched a military exercise carried out by the graduates using live ammunition.

Prince Mohammad visits air defence school

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Prince Mohammad, the personal representative of His Majesty King Hussein, Wednesday visited the Royal Air Defence School, where he was briefed by the Royal Air Defence director and the school commander on the duties and responsibilities of the school and its role in preparing and training air defence officers and soldiers.

Prince Firas attends sports festival

AMMAN (Petra) — Deputising for HRH Princess Sarvath, HRH Firas Ben Ra'd, His Majesty King Hussein's health advisor, Tuesday attended the Sixth Annual Sports Festival of the Young Women's Muslim Association at the Jordanian Sport Federation for the Handicapped.

Princess Zein attends graduation ceremony

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Princess Zein Bint Al Hussein Wednesday attended a special graduation ceremony held at the Armed Forces Education and Cultural Department for tawjihi students. At the end of the ceremony, which was attended by the assistant chief of staff for human resources and senior Armed Forces officers, Princess Zein presented certificates to the students.

CORRECTION

There were several errors in the article "Prince Rashid celebrates 19th birthday" (Wednesday, May 20). A Royal Decree was issued after HRH Prince Rashid graduated from Sandhurst Military Academy towards the end of last year appointing him second lieutenant in the Jordan Armed Forces. Prince Rashid plans to continue his studies at Cambridge University. The Jordan Times regrets any inconveniences caused by these errors.

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tions with China. That process will be continued." After addressing the crowd, the Hindu nationalist premier held a four-minute news conference — his first since taking office two months ago.

Mr. Vajpayee told reporters he was prepared to hold talks on the 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) which India has so far refused to sign.

"We are ready for discussions," he said, but refused to specify if India would sign the CTBT.

The United States and other world powers have demanded India sign up to the document immediately.

Future of police force in N. Ireland worries Protestants

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — China shares Pakistan's concerns over the "threat" from Indian nuclear tests, a top foreign ministry official said here Wednesday on return from consultations in Beijing.

Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmed told reporters Beijing had not asked Pakistan to "do anything which is not in its national interests."

China "respects the sovereign right of the country to take any measure in its national security interests," said Ahmed, the third-ranking foreign affairs official.

Ahmed had two days of meetings in Beijing that included Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan and other officials.

There was a "complete identity" of views on the gravity of the situation resulting from India's "reckless" actions and "fictitious threat from China invented by India as a pretext to promote its own hegemonic designs," he said.

During the talks the two sides "analysed at length" the international reaction to India's nuclear tests on May 11 and 13.

The meetings were an "important facet" of Pakistan's consultations with all major powers and friendly countries to "seek ways and means to effectively defuse tension and reduce the factors that have threatened peace," Mr. Ahmed said.

He said China had already condemned "in the strongest terms the outrageous Indian action to introduce nuclear weapons in South Asia which has destabilised the strategic balance in the region."

The Chinese leadership reaffirmed that the "all-weather friendship" between the two countries was "above any political expediencies."

He said Pakistan was carrying out a "thorough and measured" review of threats posed to its security and the reaction of the international community to Indian tests before deciding its response.

"These things cannot be measured in hours or days. One has to take as much time as necessary to arrive at the right decision," he added.

Tuesday a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman in Beijing called for a "decisive and clearcut" position by the international community against India to prompt it to give up its nuclear programme so as to "improve security environment for Pakistan and other sub-continent countries."

Chinese news agency applies to overturn Hong Kong court summons

recently when poor health slowed him down.

He is renowned for entertaining America's fighting men and women overseas. In World War II, Korea, Vietnam, right up to the 1991 Gulf war, Hope cheered troops with up-to-the-minute jokes and beautiful women.

Mr. Grant said it was unclear whether Hope would travel to New York Wednesday as planned. That decision would be made depending on how Hope felt when he woke up Wednesday, he added.

HONG KONG (AFP)—The head of the official Chinese news agency in Hong Kong Wednesday applied to the high court to quash a summons for him to appear before a magistrate in June, a court source said.

Jiang Enzhu filed an application for a judicial review to overturn the summons made by principal magistrate Gary Tallentire on behalf of former legislator Emily Lau, the source said.

"He is also seeking a declaration that such summons has no legal effect and he is under no obligation to appear personally," the source said.

Ms. Lau decided to take legal action against Xinhua for allegedly breaking Hong Kong's privacy ordinance.

Xinhua acted as China's de facto embassy in Hong Kong during British rule. The agency says it is an official Beijing government organ and not liable to local laws.

Cambodian dissident blasts international hypocrisy over polls

yet support a boycott.

Some denounced the front for allegedly trying to spoil the election for its own political purposes and accused it of unfairly attempting to force an end to foreign financial support for the polls.

The international community has pushed Phnom Penh to ensure the election is free and fair, but analysts have noted an unease on the part of foreign countries to get involved in electoral disputes.

Sam Rainsy said that unease was at odds with the goals set down by world powers for the election.

"I am shocked and appalled by this response," Sam Rainsy said. "We look to these diplomats and their countries for guidance on democracy, not for their support of the status quo which is undemocratic."

He added that he would travel to Europe and North America to put the front's views,

BELFAST (AFP) — For many Protestants in Northern Ireland, the uncertain future of the province's police force weighs heavily on their minds, swelling the ranks of "no" voters in the peace referendum.

The Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), for Catholic republicans a hated symbol of enforced British rule in Northern Ireland, is to be reformed under the peace deal that Ulster's electorate will vote on this Friday.

But the Protestant unionist community is afraid that

consider reform of the RUC, has been handed a hugely difficult task.

The Chief Constable of the RUC, Ronnie Flanagan, has criticised the commission as "political", and has warned against undermining the police's independence.

But republicans want the overwhelmingly Protestant-dominated force, which they accuse of sectarian harassment and human rights abuses, disbanded, and replaced by a new force at least 40 per cent Catholic.

local Sinn Féin centre IMMEDIATELY.”

She added defensively: “The RUC won’t take any action, would look the other way, won’t help nationalist people in the Catholic areas.”

Republicans want the royal prefix to be scrapped and the practice of flying the British union flag from stations ended. The RUC is willing to abandon the flag, but there is reluctance to change the name.

Even then, for republicans, that would just be a “transitory” step. “You

the force, which it considers a vital bulwark against terrorism, will be weakened just as convicted paramilitary killers are being let out of jail early.

Despite repeated assurances to the contrary by the British government, the concern — shared by some police men — is that former members of the IRA and Protestant paramilitaries will be absorbed into a new police force.

"I can understand where people are coming from there, because some government ministers have talked about two-tier (national and community-based) policing," Chief Inspector Cyril Donnan said.

"It would be absolutely disastrous for us to go down the line of recruiting paramilitaries, the very people that we seek to protect society from," he added in an interview at police headquarters in Belfast.

Chris Patten, the former Hong Kong governor and Tory party chairman, was appointed as head of the independent commission to

In the republican enclave of Ardoyne, in north Belfast, just down the road from a heavily fortified police station surrounded by four-metre concrete walls topped by barbed wire, is the local office of Sinn Féin, political wing of the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

Here, a different law applies. The office functions as an unofficial police station, where residents can bring their complaints about "anti-social" offenders such as drug-dealers, sex offenders and teenage joyriders.

Under the IRA's brutal system of common law justice within the working-class Catholic community, the "guilty" are kneecapped — shot in both ankles and legs, leaving them crippled for life.

"They are our security forces," said Margaret McClanagh, in a bunker-like office bedecked with photos of IRA activists and posters that give warnings such as: "Any harassment by the RUC in this area should be reported to your

could change their name, flag and uniform, at core they will still be the RUC," said Mrs. McClanagh.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair, however, has made it clear that the RUC, which has suffered 300 deaths and thousands of injured in 30 years of "troubles," would not be disbanded.

Instead, recruitment of more Catholic officers is a major priority.

At present, they make up only eight per cent of the force, compared to 11 per cent in 1969 and 21 per cent in 1923.

The RUC insists real efforts are being made to redress the balance. In recruitment posters, it says it "particularly welcomes applications from the Catholic community."

But Catholic officers have to run the gauntlet of threats from the IRA and face discrimination within the force.

Meanwhile, if peace sets in, the 13,000-strong force would be reduced and the focus shifted to combating more non-terrorist crime.

French police hear witness in Chirac jobs for the boys probe

PARIS (AFP) — French fraud investigators on Wednesday questioned a key witness in a probe into corruption at Paris City Hall at the time that President Jacques Chirac was mayor.

Georges Quemar, a former City Hall personnel manager, was interrogated by the fraud squad for almost three hours. He refused comment on leaving police offices.

Mr. Chirac, Paris mayor for 18 years until his election as president in 1995, is the founder of the neo-Gaullist Rally for the Republic (RPR), the largest opposition party which is currently the focus of a string of corruption probes.

In a daily paper this week, Mr. Quemar said city authorities put up to 800 bogus employees on the payroll at a cost to the taxpayer of 100 million francs (\$16.5 million) a year.

He told the *Le Parisien* daily that friends and relations of city councillors, RPR members, artists and writers, candidates beaten

in elections were employed by Paris City Hall in the 1980s in jobs that existed only on paper.

City Hall, bastion of the RPR, is already in the eye of a storm after the interrogation early this week of Paris mayoress, Xavier Tiberi, wife of Mr. Chirac's protégé and successor, Mayor Jean Tiberi.

She was placed in police custody Monday for seven hours for questioning in a separate alleged public payroll scam involving a dozen local fictitious jobs.

The mayor subsequently dashed out on the renewed corruption allegations involving the city hall and charged that the reports were an attempt to destabilise the Gaullist party and the French presidency.

"There is an attempt to destabilise the opposition (Gaullist party) and of course its former leader Jacques Chirac," Mr. Tiberi said on radio.

"This is all a show aimed at dis honouring and humiliating. Nothing justified (my wife) being held in custody," he told Europe-1.

"My wife and I are calm and determined," he said. The developments are the latest in a series of scandals, particularly in Paris, to hit the RPR which Mr. Chirac founded 22 years ago.

They add to the existing woes of the party, still reeling after a humiliating defeat in snap elections last year which Mr. Chirac called in a failed bid to increase the majority of his then-ruling party.

After leaders of the ruling Socialist Party this week raised the possibility of the head of state being brought in for questioning in the various probes, RPR leaders accused their rivals of victimising the opposition and mounting a plot to oust Mr. Chirac.

In a surprise move Wednesday, Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin rallied to the side of the conservative president, saying that he and Mr. Chirac had expressed joint concern "about statements that threaten to trouble French political life to the detriment of

[illegible]

IWC again con-

U.S. (IWC) -- The International Whaling Commission (IWC) has condemned Japan for "seriously threatening the whales which there are 17 countries in favour of Japan's condemnation of whaling in the annual meeting in the United States while nine other nations and eight other nations of the IWC condemned whaling for its "serious threat" in both Atlantic and Pacific oceans. The IWC has repeatedly urged the same resolution condemning Japan for whaling at its yearly meeting without effect. Japan has said that the whaling industry is sufficient to meet the needs of whalers on modest "harvesting" and has rejected serious arguments for setting up a moratorium on whaling in the Pacific. In previous years the IWC's latest recommendations of Japan have been rejected as "unrealistic" by Japan. Experts agree that the populations of whales are being depleted -- the less than 100,000, or fin-back whales -- have bounced back which has caused the IWC to reject the

Anti-Taleban alliance slams militia talks rejection

KABUL (AFP) — An official from Afghanistan's anti-Taleban coalition Wednesday slammed a militia decision to abandon direct talks and seek military gains in the north of the country.

A spokesman for the ousted Kabul government urged the international community to pressure the hardline Muslim militia to return to talks and warned the southern rivals that a current round of attacks would fail.

"From the very beginning the position of the Taleban was clear. They were not happy with the process of negotiations because they simultaneously launched military operations," Mohammad Arif told AFP.

Speaking by satellite telephone from the Panjshir Valley stronghold of ousted Kabul government topgun Ahmad Shah Masood, the official said the Taleban's decision to continue military operations was ill-conceived.

"If the Taleban think they can get military gains before entering another round of talks they are making a mistake because all their military programmes in the north will fail," he warned.

Tuesday a U.N. official announced the Taleban have decided to withdraw their support for the so-called ulema process, in which religious scholars nominated by both sides would hammer-out a solution to the 18 year-old civil war.

The news was the first official confirmation that the Taleban — which holds two-thirds of Afghanistan — would not continue the peace talks which broke off in Islamabad after five days on May 3.

The announcement of the Taleban decision also comes amid intensified fighting and sustained Taleban attacks in north-eastern Afghanistan, the stronghold of the ex-

Kabul government of toppled President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

Mr. Arif said it was now up to the United Nations to push the Taleban back into talks by exerting pressure on Pakistan, accused of backing the hardline movement.

He said the Islamabad talks — the breakdown of which he blamed on the Taleban — would not have taken place without the intervention by the United States ambassador to the United Nations, Bill Richardson.

"It is now up to Richardson and the U.N. to make Pakistan force the Taleban into talking, as we, the Afghan people and the international community are in favour of a negotiated settlement," he said.

No reaction from the other two dominant alliance factions of ex-Communist Abdul Rashid Dostam and the Shiite Hezb-i-Wahdat militia was immediately available.

Speaking on the current upsurge in fighting in the north of the country Mr. Arif said recent Taleban gains had been reversed.

"The Taleban have attacked north of Kabul and also towards Taloqan, but all of their efforts have failed," he claimed, adding the Taleban's air force of aged Soviet jets was also in action.

Earlier this month the Taleban seized the northeastern town of Ishkamish in Mr. Masood's stronghold of Takhar province, a post which sits on one of Mr. Masood's supply lines to frontlines north of Kabul.

"The Taleban are still in Ishkamish but we control the high ground and we are in a good position to recapture it," he asserted. No independent details of military developments in the north was immediately available.



An undated file photo showing the painting "The Gardener" by the Dutch post-impressionist Vincent van Gogh which was stolen, together with two other paintings, from Rome's Modern Art Museum (AFP photo)

Van Gogh, Cezanne paintings stolen from Rome museum

ROME (AFP) — A gang described as professional art thieves stole three major paintings by the Impressionist masters Vincent Van Gogh and Paul Cezanne from Rome's Modern Art Museum overnight, police said Wednesday.

Three armed and masked men entered the museum's security control room at about 10:40 p.m. (20H40 GMT), and overpowered three female guards, according to an initial police reconstruction of the raid. After forcing the women to turn off the alarm system and tying them up, the men went straight to a room in the museum and helped themselves to "The Gardener" and "The Woman from Arles" by van Gogh, and Cezanne's "Le Cabanon de Jourdan" (Jourdan's Cabin).

The three women were found bound and gagged in museum toilets. "It was the work of professionals," Rome's police chief Antonio Pagnozzi said.

"The men, who were wearing gloves and had taken off their shoes, managed to disable the alarm system and steal money from the safe," he said.

They swiped the video-cassettes from the museum's internal security cameras and the guard's walkie-talkies, he added. The gang took more than one million lire (\$570) from a safe, before leaving some 50 minutes after they had arrived. The alarm was raised after the owner of the museum's bar noticed the main door to the building was open, at about 1:30 a.m. (23H30 GMT). He immediately alerted a passing police patrol.

It is not the first time the museum has suffered at the hands of art thieves. In 1992 two watercolours, again by Paul Cezanne, were stolen. The same year saw a Velasquez stolen from the National Museum in Modena, northern Italy.

Together, hunting by Japan and Norway kills some 1,300 whales a year, apart from whales destroyed in commercial fishing operations, notably by South Korea.

The total population of lesser rorquals worldwide is estimated at less than one million, of which 750,000 are in the Antarctic. Several Western delegations which voted for the resolutions condemning Japan and Norway told AFP that it would be difficult to indefinitely continue the moratorium if the survival of target species is not directly threatened.

The IWC has never agreed on rules for monitoring whaling ships and whaling catches should the hunting moratorium ever be lifted.

Norway, which has consistently rejected the

Culture Minister Walter Veltroni and museum director Sandra Pinto visited the museum soon after the theft Wednesday, along with the head of the Italian police's art protection squad, Roberto Conforti.

Mr. Veltroni said he was confident the works of art would be recovered. "The heritage protection service is very efficient, and half of the works of art stolen are recovered," he said.

Experts said it would be difficult to sell the three paintings on the art market. "The Women from Arles", which has been in the possession of the gallery for a number of years, is a 60 by 50 centimetre unsigned oil on canvas portrait of a Madame Ginoux.

She took care of Van Gogh in the southern French town of Arles after he suffered his first major bout of depression, in 1890.

The tormented Dutch painter did the work in January and February of 1890, some months before he committed suicide in August of that year.

It is one of three paintings of Madame Ginoux, but is regarded by critics as the best. The other two are in museums in Brazil and the Netherlands.

"The Gardener" portrays a sad-looking peasant wearing a straw hat. The unsigned 61 by 50 centimetre oil on canvas painting was created in the spring of 1889, when an ill Van Gogh was convalescing in the southern town of Saint Remy.

It has been in the possession of the Rome museum for several years. "Jourdan's Cabin", also known as "House and Trees", is an oil on canvas 65 by 81 centimetre work painted in 1906, the year the artist died.

The unfinished painting was bought by the museum in 1986.

Fireworks factory blast kills eight

BEIJING (AFP) — An explosion at a Japanese-owned fireworks factory in southern China's Guangdong province has killed eight people including a Japanese national, local police said Wednesday.

The blast — which took place Tuesday in Boluo city, about 100 kilometres east of the provincial capital Guangzhou — also injured 46 people, a police spokesman told AFP.

A second Japanese businessman was among the injured, he added. Hong Kong's Ming Pao daily reported earlier

Wednesday that more than 100 firemen and 200 soldiers were needed to put out the blaze that followed at the Boluo Fireworks Co. Ltd. plant.

The Chinese-language newspaper had put the initial toll at nine dead and 66 injured.

It was China's third industrial explosion reported in a month. On May 2, a blast at a table-tennis ball factory killed nine and seriously injured one in the eastern Zhejiang province.

A chemical plant explosion in northern Shijiazhuang city killed six and injured five on April 28.

Russian Communists launch new impeachment bid against Yeltsin

MOSCOW (AFP) — The Russian Communist Party rallied support from 177 deputies Wednesday for a motion aimed at launching impeachment proceedings against President Boris Yeltsin.

The long and complicated impeachment procedure looked unlikely to succeed, but the Communists obtained more than the 150 signatures necessary to put the matter to a vote in both houses of parliament — the next stage after examination of the motion by a special parliamentary commission.

"The president will react calmly to the impeachment bid," said Mr. Yeltsin's spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky, quoted by Interfax news agency.

The spokesman said that "all previous attempts made by opposition radicals in

the Duma" to push for impeachment "were legally null and void."

An impeachment motion must be backed by a two-thirds majority in both houses — the Duma and Federation Council — to be adopted.

Yegor Stroyev, speaker of the upper house Federation Council, promptly announced that the chamber, which groups the leaders of Russia's 89 regions, would not back the motion. Under the 1993 constitution drawn up by Mr. Yeltsin himself, a Russian president can only be impeached for "treason or a serious crime."

Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov accused Mr. Yeltsin of "crimes against the country and people," denouncing as "high treason" the Russian leader's signing of the 1991

Belovezhskaya Pushcha accords which dissolved the Soviet Union.

Mr. Zyuganov also alleged that Mr. Yeltsin organised a coup d'état in 1993 when he sought to dissolve the old Soviet-era parliament, overstepping his constitutional rights.

Mr. Yeltsin's move triggered fierce resistance by hardline deputies, who holed themselves up in parliament and were finally ousted by pro-Yeltsin troops at a cost of some 150 lives.

Mr. Zyuganov said Mr. Yeltsin had "harmful the country's security and fighting capability," by allowing the Russian armed forces to run out of cash and by signing disarmament accords regarded as a betrayal by the Communists.

"The situation is getting

out of control, but the most amazing thing is that the executive authorities regard all these events with criminal indifference," Mr. Zyuganov said.

The Duma, dominated by Communist and nationalist deputies, has stepped up its challenge to the Kremlin since Mr. Yeltsin pushed through the appointment of Sergei Kiriyenko, a 35-year-old reformist technocrat, as prime minister in April.

In January 1997 the Duma debated possible impeachment of Mr. Yeltsin on grounds of ill health, as he was in hospital suffering from double pneumonia just two months after undergoing a quintuple heart bypass operation.

However, on that occasion deputies voted against a draft resolution calling for his impeachment.

State of emergency declared in strike-bound Siberian coal region

MOSCOW (AFP) — A state of emergency was declared in the Siberian region of Kemerovo Wednesday as miners protesting massive wage arrears severed a second key railway line, threatening to paralyse the entire region.

Kemerovo Governor Aman Tuleyev told Interfax he had ordered the emergency measures to protect more than 100 trains carrying explosives and dangerous chemicals which had been brought to a halt in the region.

The declaration would also guarantee food, power and heating supplies to the region, which has been squeezed by miners protesting wage arrears totalling 3.7 billion rubles (\$600 million) as of May 1.

Local police, transport police and the regional department of the emergency situations ministry would enforce the measures, the governor said.

The emergency measures would allow the authorities to protect all vital installations, but Mr. Tuleyev ruled out using force to clear the

railway lines.

"The state of emergency does not mean force will be used against the strikers. That is categorically ruled out," Interfax quoted Mr. Tuleyev as saying.

"The main aim of the state of emergency is to ensure that the region's vital installations continue to function," he said.

Mr. Tuleyev said he had declared a state of emergency "because the situation is teetering on the absurd in Leninsk-Kuznetsky, where the strikers are trying to cut off the

water supplies," Interfax reported.

Coal workers have been blocking trains on the main trans-Siberian line at Anzhero-Sudzhensk for the past six days, but traffic has been rerouted around them on alternative tracks.

However, by cutting the line at Prokopyevsk early Wednesday the miners severed the main link still open, isolating the Kemerovo region completely and preventing goods from reaching Russia's vast eastern tracts.

Cyclone spares Bangladesh coast, 1,500 shanty houses damaged

CHITTAGONG, Bangladesh (AFP) — Bangladesh appeared to have been spared by a cyclone Wednesday which weakened before crossing the southeastern coast with no immediate reports of casualties.

This is the second time the coast and this key port city have escaped recently without major casualties or devastation.

Wednesday's cyclone from the Bay of Bengal weakened and crossed the Chittagong-Shitakunda coast with a maximum wind speed of 130 kilometres an hour, local officials said, adding several hundred low-cost houses were damaged and trees and power lines broken.

In Anwara, one of the most vulnerable coastal sub-districts near the port city, some 1,500 houses were damaged with some 4,000 people affected or left homeless, disaster and relief officials said.

Officials, however, said they were still waiting for reports from local authorities.

Red Crescent and district officials declined to comment on an unconfirmed local report claiming five deaths in the cyclone.

Earlier reports said hundreds of thousands of people fled to safety amid fears of a high death toll.

More than 300,000 people had been moved to safety in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar before the cyclone hit.

The military was deployed Tuesday night in most areas with trucks and medical teams.

The eye of the storm was to coincide with a high tide which officials earlier feared would result in flooding along crowded coastal areas and nearby islands.

The official BSS news agency warned there could be high loss of life and damage because of the tide and huge waves crashing ashore.

In its early stages the storm had hit this southeastern port city and suburbs with winds up to 120 to 130 kilometres an hour, local officials said,

adding the wind strength was higher on the off-shore Kumbodia and St. Martin islands.

Two ships being moved out of the harbour for safety collided, a port official told AFP, adding there was no serious damage caused.

Officials also expressed concern about different forecasts on the timing and direction of the cyclone issued by various government departments and agencies.

A spokesman for Prime

Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed said she was monitoring events and had ordered government departments to take necessary precautions.

Bangladesh's last major cyclone in 1991 left more than 139,000 people dead and thousands of homes destroyed. Two cyclones in the past two years left several hundred dead.

In Dhaka Bangladesh's opposition has postponed a one-day hunger strike against a tribal peace pact in areas hit

by the cyclone Wednesday, a spokesman said, adding the decision was taken late Tuesday as the cyclone neared the coast.

The planned protests in other districts not likely to be affected by the storm would go ahead.

The opposition is waging a campaign against the peace treaty signed with tribal insurgents in southeastern Bangladesh last December, claiming it is unconstitutional.

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The way it *chip talk* used to be



By Jean-Claude Elias

LAST YEAR, one of my Chip Talks was dedicated to computer jargon. I was trying then to take the mystery out of some strange terms. If it is true that each trade, each specialty has its own jargon, none is adding new terms to its glossary at the speed information technology (IT) is.

Contrary to some disciplines, medicine in particular, that build completely new words using Latin or Greek roots, most of — but not all — computer terms are taken from everyday language, though they end up having a new meaning. Take "windows" for instance. Using it in IT context, one forgets what it originally meant. This time, and in a less serious format, I would like to share with you the message I received by e-mail a few days ago and entitled "A computer was something on TV." I hope you will enjoy it as much as I did.

A window was something you hated to clean.
And RAM was the cousin of a goat.
MEG was the name of my girlfriend.
And GIG was your middle finger upright.
Now they all mean different things.
And that really MEGA bytes.
An application was for employment.
A programme was a TV show.
A cursor [sic] used profanity.
A keyboard was a piano.
Memory was something that you lost with age.
A CD was a bank account.
And if you had a 3 1/2" floppy, you hoped nobody found out.
Compress was something you did to the garbage.
Not something you did to a file.
And if you uncapped anything in public, you'd be in jail for a while.

Log on was adding wood to the fire.
Hard drive was a long trip on the road.
A mouse pad was where a mouse lived.
And a backup happened to your commode.
Cut you did with a pocket knife.
Paste you did with glue.
A web was a spider's home.
And a virus was the flu.
I guess I'll stick to my pad and paper.
And the memory in my head.
I hear nobody's been killed in a computer crash.
But when it happens they wish they were dead.

Thanks to Nayla K. for e-mailing the above "poem." We don't know who wrote it, it was just sent to a group of friends.

Society on the move

Returning to Jordan in various arenas

Staying on in Amman until Saturday following his participation in the conference last week on Arab Oil and Diplomacy, is renowned French writer Eric Rouleau. The former chief editor of Le Monde, is touching base with his Jordanian associates in officialdom, academia and the press. In his earlier career he was Le Monde's chief Middle East correspondent. Fluent in Arabic, Mr. Rouleau has always been sympathetic to the Arab World. Back in Jordan, the news-stand realities were an eye opener for Mr. Rouleau who was learning of the success of new dailies, the trials and tribulations of some weeklies and the changes in the face and format of the press.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS: While the wait continues on the naming of a secretary general for the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has promoted Nabih Shukun to the same post. Mr. Shukun, a former director of His Majesty King Hussein's Royal Protocol, has held the rank of ambassador for the past six years. He was most recently head of research at the foreign ministry. Another appointment last week was that of Mohammad Daoudieh, a former minister of youth, deputy and advisor to the Royal Court. Mr. Daoudieh was appointed ambassador at the foreign ministry. Meanwhile, candidates for secretary general at the Ministry of Tourism are said to be rising in number. At last count, they were nine. The heat is on.

RE-OPENED: After a five-year hiatus the Republic of the Philippines re-opened its embassy in Jordan. The embassy in Amman as well as some other embassies around the world were closed in 1993 by the Philippines Foreign Ministry because of financial constraints. Since then, however, Manila has been working on reopening several missions. Jordan was selected this year because the Kingdom is considered one of the most important bilateral partners of the Philippines in the Middle East and its role in the peace process is viewed by Manila as key. Naturally, the large presence of Filipino workers in Jordan also weighed significantly in the decision to reopen. Ambassador Ruperto M. Dizon, who presented his credentials to His Majesty King Hussein earlier this

month, is career diplomat. He has served in South America, and the United States. His most recent post was as director for South American Affairs in the Office of American Affairs in Manila. Mr. Dizon arrived in Amman with his wife Erlinda. The couple have three children at school in the U.S. Mrs. Dizon is abroad visiting them now and will return to Amman in July. While the embassy was closed, diplomatic activity came under the jurisdiction of, first the Philippines embassy in Tel Aviv and later Baghdad. The full mission in Amman comprises political, consular, trade and economics, and cultural sections. The embassy is temporarily housed in the Amra Hotel. A new site has been selected, but finalisation of the lease is still forthcoming.

IN DROVES: Ambassador Merry Wickes is known not to stand on too much formality, and at the same time she is conscious of the various dos and don'ts of her host society. That is probably why her receptions are some of the most frequented by her long list of VIP guests, associates and friends. Thus it was last Thursday evening that her residence was a full house, indoors and outdoors, of people coming to congratulate her on her marking of Australia's National Day. The country's national day actually fell during the month of Ramadan, and Ambassador Wickes opted to postpone the celebration until a more appropriate time.

FIRST-HAND LOOK: The folks at the British Department for International Development were exercising some newly acquired autonomy, now that the Labour Party is in power. Their permanent secretary, John Vereker, was here in Jordan last week with some of his staff to check on the progress of various projects being implemented in the Kingdom. With the department no longer tied strictly to the British Foreign Office, its administrators are going about their business with more flexibility. The last time Mr. Vereker was in the region was more than 30 years ago just following the June 67 war. He was on holiday from his studies and pick the Middle East as his destination. During last week's visit, Mr. Vereker was able to meet with several of his Jordanian and interna-

tional NGO partners and associates at a reception hosted in his honour by British Ambassador Christopher Batiscombe last Thursday. Among those attending were Noor Al Hussein Foundation Director Dr. Sima Bahous and UNIFEM Director Dr. Haifa Abu Ghazaleh.

CONCERNED: Environmental awareness preoccupied the 7th graders at the American Community School during their recent observance of Earth Week. So much so in fact, that each of the 29 students wrote a letter to the editor of the Jordan Times, with just a little prompting from their language arts instructor Joyce Qasim. The theme running through every letter was that these students love and appreciate Jordan, but are disturbed and concerned about the amount of pollution taking its toll on the country. They were particularly piqued by litter and the lack of responsibility among motorists who think nothing of tossing their trash out their vehicle windows. The students called for more environmental legislation, more public trash bins, and increased awareness programmes. As we are unable to publish all the students' letters, we herein acknowledge the signatories: Ali Hussein, Amro Zakarni, Ayaleh Radnitz, Catherine Manners, Desta Hailé, Diana Al Daoud, Dina Mikdadi, Eric Young, Jagjit Singh, Jenna Prust, Jihan Kliebo, Ken Miller, Lindsay Lucke, Majid Shabou, Megan Barlett, Mohammad Taha, Mohammad Azri Besar, Muna Shoman, Nader Momani, Nadine Shahwan, Najwa Kandil, Natasha Al Mufleh, Nijma Odeh, Noor Abulzabab, Uvnie Heritarachy, Vittoria Reimers, Woong-Gi Han, Yoo-Min Hong, Zaid and Nabil Abdul Fattah.

CARRY ON: The Jordanian-British Society elected its new board for the next two years. The members are: Tariq Suheimat, president; Ziyad Murad, secretary general; Nabih Azzam, treasurer; and Rateb Lawzi, Zuhair Sha'er, Shafiq Jumean, Awad Khalidi, Abdul Hadi Majali, Mohammad Imam, Dr. Hisham Abu Hasan, and Dr. Sa'eb Hammoudeh. British Ambassador Batiscombe is the society's permanent vice president.

Jennifer Hamarneh

King stresses that objectives of peace process will prevail

(Continued from page 1)

by the High Court of Justice.

Tight press regulations, the elections law, and normalisation of ties with Israel were at the centre of a severe crisis between the government and the opposition.

The King broke a six-month deadlock in relations between the two sides by making a surprise visit on Monday to the Union of Professional Associations Complex, the headquarters of the opposition for more than three decades.

Describing his meeting with the leaders of the 13 unions as the opening of a new bright page of cooperation and understanding, the King ordered the release of outspoken opposition figure Leith Shbeilat, a self-styled Islamist jailed for allegedly instigating the pro-Iraq Ma'an riots in February.

After his address yesterday, the King ordered the release of all other prisoners arrested in connection with the Ma'an riots.

"As to the demonstrations, I realise the feelings of our people and more than any one else feel disturbed after having gone through frustration and so many setbacks."

"But we should not lose hope and... in expressing our feelings we should follow a civilised pattern if we really want to help... in ways that benefit the people. But chaos and rioting achieve nothing."

"We hope that we are now starting a new phase, and we will achieve security, stability and tranquillity," the King said.

Addressing the needs of the judicial system, the King said: "There has been a great deal of negligence for a long time, whether in the preparation of young people or in sending them on scholarships or out to the world in order that they can discover what the new trends are, or qualifying them so that they can shoulder their responsibilities in the best possible manner."

The King called on the government to engage in a direct dialogue, "not only through correspondents, but through follow-ups, contacts, and research," with the opposition and the professional unions.

On the other hand, the King asked the 80,000-strong unions to "offer professional services to raise the standards of the professions in the full sense of the word."

Democracy, he said, is still passing through a phase in which political parties are not yet developed and crystallised.

The King noted that the transition from a tribal political environment, where deputies are elected according to family affiliations, to an advanced multi-party democracy, in which deputies are elected for their party's political platform, "might take 20 years."

The King also urged

the executive and legislative authorities "to take into consideration all aspects of Jordan's internal problems."

"If we consider unemployment, for instance, we should ask what its causes are. Has it only got to do with non-Jordanians working here? Aren't there any serious decisions that should be taken at the education level to bridge certain gaps?" the King asked.

"Thank God, the infrastructure is good and it is available everywhere, but still everyone of us should keep his/her eyes open, continuously."

"In most cases, most of the decisions are carried out, but sometimes either me, or my brother, Prince Hassan, or the prime minister, or other people, find that certain matters have been neglected or delayed," the King said.

'Iraq embargo should be lifted'

King Hussein said the U.N. sanctions on Iraq would never lead to the downfall of the Iraqi leadership.

"The embargo on Iraq should be lifted," the King reiterated.

"If anybody believes that Iraq will be forced to make changes, this is nonsense and unjustified talk, because the people who are allowed to live, eat and drink and find medication, are the people who can take the decision by themselves and who can reorganise their life and avert future

disasters."

The King stressed Jordan's continuous efforts to ease the suffering of the Iraqi people, crushed by eight years of crippling sanctions.

The King reiterated his "desire" for a direct dialogue between Washington and Baghdad.

"If the two sides could discuss relations between them in Geneva before [the 1990-1991 Gulf] war, why can't they now speak to one another, present their terms and their conditions, and speak about their fears of mass-destruction weapons?"

On inter-Arab relations, the King said "there is nothing that prevents our relations with Syria from being normal."

The King stressed the crucial role played by the Hashemites and Jordan, and pointed out that there has been a trend among politicians and historians in other Arab countries to claim credit for the achievements of the Hashemite family and Jordan.

The King was referring to recent "imaginative and inaccurate" programmes broadcast by satellite stations on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the "Nakbeh" [catastrophe] — the 1948 war that led to the creation of the state of Israel on parts of British-mandate Palestine.

Syria favours a conference to 'save the peace process'

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syria said Wednesday that a Franco-Egyptian proposal to organise a "conference of countries determined to save the peace process" would help bring peace to the Middle East.

"To join all the efforts through an enlarged conference, which would dot the 'i's, affirm the peace principles, and expose the policy of sabotage followed by [Israeli Prime Minister] Benjamin Netanyahu, would put pressure on the Israeli government," Syria's official daily Tishrin wrote.

"Such a conference could show the Israelis themselves that their government is dragging them into an impasse," the newspaper added.

According to Tishrin, "the American leaders are avoiding entering into a direct conflict with Israel because they take seriously the threats of Netanyahu

and the Zionist lobby."

"In Europe the situation is different," the daily wrote, adding that "European leaders are conscious of the results of the deadlock in the peace process."

French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin raised the idea of a conference to save the Middle East peace process following talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Paris Tuesday.

Mr. Mubarak had called for greater international pressure on Israel to fulfil its commitments to the Palestinians.

Israel has strongly resisted any enhanced role for the European Union in the U.S.- and Russian-sponsored peace process, saying that the EU is biased against it.

U.S.: day is not far before going public on reasons behind failure of peace proposals

(Continued from page 1)

matic adviser, Uzi Arad, said sanctions would violate Israeli-Palestinian economic accords signed in Paris in 1994.

The European Commission has said Israel is guilty of "massive fraud" by giving products made in the settlements, located in occupied territories not recognised as part of Israel, a "Made in Israel" label which wins them tariff reductions into Europe.

Israeli anger at Europe was increased by a French proposal to hold a conference of "nations who seek to save peace," from which Paris wants to exclude Israel, the Israeli press said.

"Holding such a confer-

ence without the concerned parties obviously aims to pressure Israel," a senior official told the daily Haaretz.

"It is impossible to convoke a conference of countries determined to save the peace process with the participation of Mr. Netanyahu," French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine told the daily Haaretz.

"That's why the conference needs to be envisaged as taking place in two stages," he said, with the Israelis and Palestinians only participating at a later stage.

French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin raised the idea of a conference to save the Middle East peace process following talks with Egyptian Presi-

dent Hosni Mubarak in Paris Tuesday.

"France and Egypt cannot stand by and see this deterioration, to let this impending catastrophe happen," Mr. Jospin said.

In a final indignity, the government of Singapore turned down an Israeli proposal for a visit by Mr. Netanyahu to the city-state.

Singapore officials said that if Mr. Netanyahu came they would be forced to criticise his policies in the peace process and the result would "run the risk of damaging relations" between the two countries, the Maasir said.

In Tel Aviv, several Israeli ministers expressed concern during a cabinet meeting

Wednesday about the way Mr. Netanyahu is conducting the country's business, Israeli radio said.

Israeli National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon and Tourism Minister Moshe Kartzav complained that no cabinet debate had been held on Mr. Netanyahu's trip to the United States and other efforts to re-launch the peace process.

Israeli Science Minister Michael Eytan warned that a serious crisis could erupt in U.S.-Israeli relations, the radio said.

The cabinet wound up its session without making any decisions, it added.

Israel orders renovation at Al Aqsa stopped

(Continued from page 1)

several hundred worshippers.

On Wednesday, reporters were barred from entering the vault locked by an iron gate. Construction workers had been sent home, but were expected to return soon, said Isam Awad, the chief engineer of the

mosque.

Mohammad Nusseibeh, the acting head of the Higher Islamic Council, said Israel had no right to order the work stopped.

The issue of who is in charge has never been made entirely clear. After Israel occupied the area in the 1967 Mideast war, Muslim officials retained a large degree of auto-

my in administering the holy sites.

Last year, Israeli officials tried in vain to stop the renovation of another underground vault, known as Solomon's Stables, that is now being used as a mosque.

Israeli officials apparently feared at the time they might trigger widespread riots if they used

force to stop the construction.

Israeli Public Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani said Wednesday that Israel would not back down this time. "A change in the status of the Temple Mount is not allowed by either side," he said.

Shbeilat insists on appeal

(Continued from page 1)

Jordan News Agency, Petra, on Wednesday that he did not ask anyone to vie for him to stop "my national activity," and added that "I have never previously asked anyone to pardon me on claimed crimes which I do not admit to committing, where I, if there were men, [would be] exercising my protected constitutional rights."

Mr. Shbeilat said an amnesty involving him would violate the constitution since the verdict against him was not final because he was still appealing to the Court of Cassation.

already happened, and in order not to embarrass who issued the decision by issuing unpleasant statements on this unrequited pardon, I will refrain from exploding the news of my rejection of the Royal pardon on one condition only... the execution of the Royal decree issued Nov. 12 to pardon all who spent reasonable time in jail, and those who do not pose a security threat... as in the Royal letter sent to [ex-Prime Minister Abdel Karim] Kabariti... the content of the letter was not executed."

His pardon was made complicated because the verdict by the State Security Court is not final

since it is contestable at the Court of Cassation.

Acting Information Minister Nasser Lawzi said on Tuesday that the court's verdict was not final, and that "if Mr. Shbeilat's lawyers decide not to appeal, the verdict will be final and Mr. Shbeilat will be subject to the King's pardon. But if the lawyers decide to appeal, then the Court of Cassation can either endorse the State Security Court's verdict or acquit him."

Mr. Shbeilat has already been pardoned twice by King Hussein in 1992 and 1996, after being convicted by the State Security Court of treason and lese majeste.

Mr. Shbeilat, 56, was convicted by the State Court of inciting riots and ordered his immediate imprisonment. He was released on a JD 2,000 bail in April after spending almost eight weeks in detention.

Mr. Shbeilat, the former president of the Engineers Association, was detained by the authorities while on his way back to Amman on Feb. 20, after delivering a sermon at Ma'an's main mosque a day before pro-Iraqi unrest broke out in the southern town.

One Jordanian was killed and over 20 were injured in the riots that rocked the town.

U.N.: Palestinian unemployment dips, but living standards fall

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian employment improved in 1997, but economic growth slowed and standards of living fell, the United Nations said in a report released Wednesday. Unemployment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including "discouraged workers," fell from 32 per cent in 1996 to 30 per cent in 1997, due in large part to a 14 per cent increase in the number of Palestinians working in Israel, said the report.

But the average daily wage fell by 7.5 per cent to \$15.9 a day, said the report, prepared by the U.N.'s special coordinator in the occupied territories.

Gross national product grew by three per cent but gross domestic product, which excludes income from abroad, grew by one per cent "despite more optimistic projections."

But since the population grew by 4.5 per cent "average per capita income in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was further reduced in 1997," the report said.

Standards of living also continued to decrease with a 9.4 per cent decline in monthly household expenditures, it said. Private investment contributed to growth, with a 15 per cent increase in the number of new companies

registered, a 10 per cent increase in construction activity and a two per cent increase in trade flows.

Average bank lending to the private sector grew 59 per cent to \$548 million.

One in five work days were lost during the year due to complete Israeli closures of the West Bank and Gaza Strip — down from 29 per cent of work days in 1996 — causing direct losses of \$228 million.

Majali seeks economic ties with PNA equal to advanced political level

By Mahmoud Masharqa
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Ziyad Majali, the head of Jordan's Representation Office in the Palestine National Authority (PNA) self-rule areas, Wednesday called for enhancing economic cooperation between Jordan and the PNA to reach the same advanced level of political ties between the two sides.

"To achieve this objective, we face some obstacles emanating from the

nature of the economic agreements between the Palestinians and the Israelis. These agreements should be revised every six months in accordance with the Paris trade protocol," Mr. Majali said.

He added that Jordan and the PNA are now exerting efforts to overcome the obstacles such as increasing the exchange of goods between them. "These efforts include developing bilateral relations from time to time to cope with the latest developments."

he indicated. Mr. Majali said the joint Jordanian-Palestinian economic committee meeting will be held soon.

"This meeting will be followed by another one for the ministers of trade and industry of Jordan, PNA and Israel," said Mr. Majali.

In reply to a question on the difficulties facing the exchange of goods between Jordan and the PNA, Mr. Majali said: "They are numerous such as the issue of transportation of goods and the

Israeli technical and security measures which result in damaging these goods as well as the list of goods exchanged."

Mr. Majali revealed that Jordan and Israel have recently reached an agreement on the door-to-door transportation of cement.

He added that Jordan will discuss the trilateral meeting means of developing this agreement to cover all goods exchanged between Jordan and the PNA.

Jordan Public Payphones Services Co. (JPP) main participant in 'Turkish Days in Jordan'

JORDAN PUBLIC Payphones Services Co. (JPP) was registered at the Ministry of Trade on June 6, 1997 and commenced its official operation on October, 1997. JPP is a partnership between a Jordanian company, Alpha International, and a Turkish company, Rumeli Telecom, a member of the Rumeli Group of companies. Rumeli Telecom is involved in a number of telecommunication projects in various countries including Turkey, Northern Cyprus, Azerbaijan and most recently Jordan.

Alpay Ozceviz, general manager of JPP, stated that the company aims to provide high quality telecommunication services to the Jordanian consumer at competitive rates. Eventually, the company aims to install one pay phone per 500 inhabitants. Furthermore, JPP utilizes advanced systems and equipment which will enhance the level of service to the public. In an effort to participate and encourage local businesses, JPP has awarded JAMCO (a leading Jordanian Aluminium Manufacturing Co.) the contract for Manufacturing all its phone booths.

JPP utilizes smart card systems for its payphones (JAIB). JAIB is sold in three denominations JD2, JD5 and JD9.

JPP offers Jordanian companies a new media for advertising: Sides of the booth, on the screens of the phones and on the JAIB card.

FOR SALE BMW 530, Model 1989, Mileage 193,000 Full Options except air-conditioning Excellent condition Duty Unpaid Tel.: 5929452 or 5930351 ext.: 81 Price: U.S.\$8,000

OAPEC: Arab crude oil reserves total 643 billion barrels

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Arab crude oil reserves total some 643 billion barrels, making up nearly two thirds of all the world's reserves, the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) said.

According to OAPEC figures, the Arab countries' reserves stood at 643 billion barrels at the end of last year. At that same time, worldwide oil reserves reached 1.03 trillion barrels.

Saudi Arabia holds most of the Arab crude oil reserves, with 261.5 billion barrels, followed by Iraq at 112.5 billion barrels. Next come the United

Arab Emirates (UAE), with 98.1 billion barrels, Kuwait, with 96.5 billion, Libya, with 45 billion, and Algeria, with 10 billion.

Other Arab countries hold less than six billion barrels in reserves. They include Oman, with 5.2 billion, Yemen, with four billion, Qatar and Egypt, with three billion each, Syria, with 2.5 billion, Tunisia and Sudan, with 300 million each, and Bahrain, with 200 million.

The OAPEC comprises ten countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and the UAE.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, MAY 22, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) It's a wonderful evening for romance, although there's a little confusion later. Something doesn't turn out quite the way you planned it, and the problem seems to be financial. Keep your credit cards and your cash in different pockets, so if you lose one, you've still got the other.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Somebody's nagging you. You want to run, but that's not your style. Your style is to stand there and take it. That's why others feel free to tell you what's on their minds. Your only problem is that you don't often tell them back. Today, go ahead.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Meet with friends during the day and figure out what to do next. Everybody wants to do something significant. They look to you for creative ideas, and you're full of them. All in all, this looks like a marvelous day for everybody concerned. Have fun, and help others.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) There may be another opportunity for you to say what's on your mind, and you're wondering if you should. Actually, that's good. That wondering helps you keep in control of the situation. Go ahead and choose your words carefully, but do let some of them out.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) If you're going to start new projects, take care. They'll turn out well eventually, but there are a couple of snags in the way first. Look at them as problems to be solved, and they won't be so threatening. Just don't try to do everything all by yourself.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) A sweetheart or loved one might want to spend more than you think is appropriate. Don't be dismayed or dissuaded, even if he or she throws a fit. You're the one who has been called on to act as the expert in this situation, remember? Don't forget that. Be firm.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You feel like going places and doing things. You want to climb out of your rut. And, a very attractive somebody makes it even worse with radical suggestions. If you're not careful, you'll run off and do one of them. Oh, well. If you must, you must.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) There are emergencies popping up left and right. Luckily, you work well under pressure. You love excitement, the more dangerous the better. If you think of your frustration in terms of a battle to be fought and won, you'll make it a lot more fun for yourself.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) If you're not already in love, it could certainly happen before this day is over. If you are, or if you have a good prospect picked out, be with that person as much as possible. No flirting on the job, though. Set up something for later and then enjoy yourself fully in an appropriate setting.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Discuss improvements you've been thinking about making to your place with your sweetheart or partner. Having an objective that's bigger than both of you is great for a relationship. That's true even if you're just dating, by the way.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You're very intelligent, but today you'll be even smarter than usual. That's good, because you'll have a puzzle to solve tonight. This could turn out to be an advantage. You'll look so good fixing this thing that you'll gain stature in the eyes of someone you admire.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You've got lots to do, and might be concerned about time and money. You don't have the time to figure out how much money you have, however. Hopefully, you've already done that. If not, perhaps you can get a loved one to do it for you. It's worth a try.

Birthstone of May: Emerald — Citrine

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, MAY 21

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Your reflexes are faster than lightning, mentally and physically. You're the answer before most people have figured out the question. You'll also have more patience than usual. Think things over carefully, act quickly and move beyond your wildest dreams.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You have to do something you already said you would. It's going to be expensive, and you're going to have to pay for it. If you can't think of anything that fits this description, look through your stack of bills. There's something in there that's coming due.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You are hot. You are magnificent. You've made a decision and it looks fabulous on you. You're strong and decisive and powerful, and better looking than you have been in days. This is great. You're attracting a lot of attention, too. Get used to it!

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Finish old projects, clear up misunderstandings and tidy things up, both in your outside environment and in your imagination. If looks like this involves somebody who outranks you. Don't worry about it. Go ahead and get something off your chest. You'll feel lighter.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You are a builder and a creator, of course, but you like to be doing pretty much the same thing year after year. In other words, you're predictable. Now others are pushing you to try new things. Might as well give it a try. They probably know what they're talking about.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You may have to deal with other people's money. It could be your own household account or money you're managing for somebody else. This is the area in which you excel. That's why so many people want you to handle their finances for them. Use those skills today to calm a nervous person.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) If you can take off on a trip around the world, do it! If you can't, don't feel too miserable. You can quell some of the longing by watching an action-packed adventure video set in a foreign locale. It's not the same, of course, but it's better than nothing.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) A co-worker can't seem to make up his or her mind about what to do next. Don't let somebody else's emergency fluster you, especially if it's not your fault. You might be able to settle this person down, though, and that would be helpful to all concerned.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) There's probably a passionate romance going on in your life. If not, it should be easy to get one started. You're facing a challenge, but not to worry. With coaching from a wise professional advisor, you can handle any problems that pop up, quite easily.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You're exceptionally cute right now, and attractive to others. That's partially because you're so smart and partially because you're so kind. Some people think of Capricorns as "standoffish," but it's more like you're shy. Today, that shyness will be quite appealing.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You're finding it easier to be uninhibited. You may not have thought of yourself as particularly loose, but you've been known to get that way. You're OK with friends, but sometimes you get tongue-tied in an intimate relationship. Try it again tonight. It should be easier.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) The time for planning and fantasizing is done. It's time for action. No time to sit back and ponder. You're going to be literally creating whatever you want. It's been said that life is just one act of creation after another, and that's certainly going to be the case today.

Birthstone of May: Emerald — Citrine

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- 1 Road safety grp.
- 2 Manipulated
- 3 1990 U.S. Open winner: Hale
- 4 Haight: pref.
- 5 Stout's wife
- 6 Paris waterway
- 7 Ring
- 8 Group of eight
- 9 James Russell or Army
- 10 Make merry
- 11 Backward
- 12 Galactic time period
- 13 Antelope of the Himalayas
- 14 Walk leisurely
- 15 Ring
- 16 John Jacob
- 17 Unlawful activity
- 18 Commercial, in brief
- 19 Carefree spree
- 20 Handmade weapons
- 21 Fencer's sword
- 22 Land in the Seine
- 23 on-Trent
- 24 Perfect places
- 25 Ring
- 26 Ultimate purpose
- 27 Spanish Mrs.
- 28 "Nova" network
- 29 Purple shade
- 30 J.F. Kennedy's vessel
- 31 Gin and
- 32 Backbone
- 33 Inking
- 34 Ireland
- 35 Lost color
- 36 Represent
- 37 Stinging insect

DOWN

- 1 Syrup source
- 2 Sneezing sound
- 3 Engulf
- 4 Accomplished
- 5 Remove stoppages
- 6 Body of water
- 7 First name in mysteries
- 8 Curvaceous cutie
- 9 Chemical element form
- 10 Slope
- 11 Cornie commentator
- 12 Chemical suffix
- 13 Final profit
- 14 English composer
- 15 Components of everything
- 16 Boat holder
- 17 Hang in loose folds
- 18 Carrying a burden
- 19 Snaking curves
- 20 Chinese cooker
- 21 Actress Slezak
- 22 Metal fasteners
- 23 Lavin sit-com
- 24 Beauty business
- 25 Prevailing force
- 26 Unmoving
- 27 Ames and Asner
- 28 Cut and pasted together
- 29 Muse of poetry
- 30 Containing salt
- 31 Founding
- 32 Speakers platforms
- 33 Max and Buddy
- 34 Thrust prob.
- 35 Actor Tamiroff
- 36 Surrender formally
- 37 Tooted
- 38 Recipe meas.
- 39 WWII ration-book group
- 40 Nays & one
- 41 Truly

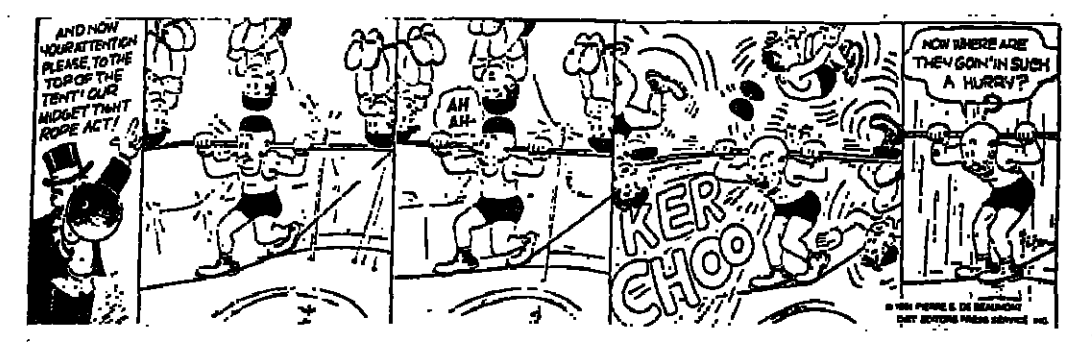
Peanuts



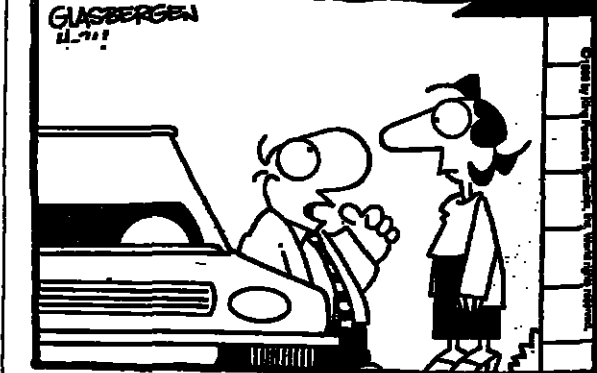
Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



"My brother paid \$1,000 for his watch - big deal! I paid \$15,000 for my clock and it came with four wheels and an engine!"

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

PIERG

WONNK

URAUBE

UNJELG

Answer: THEY

Saturday's Jumble: LATCH MILKY PARISH BENIGN

Answer: What the ultra-conservative immediately got after lunch — "THE LIES OF RIGHT"

Daily

A review of

High-income from receiving

THE MINISTRY of Finance decided to exclude high-income earners from the list of beneficiaries of the broad-based subsidy. The exclusion will affect those who earn more than \$500 per month within the efforts being carried out to reduce the subsidy to low-income earners who deserve it.

This decision follows the spread of the subsidy to include the private sector, which has been a major source of income which the Ministry of Finance has been trying to distribute. The broad-based subsidy has been a major source of income which the Ministry of Finance has been trying to distribute.

Government sources indicated that the broad-based subsidy has been a major source of income which the Ministry of Finance has been trying to distribute. The broad-based subsidy has been a major source of income which the Ministry of Finance has been trying to distribute.

United Engineering after cutting prod

THE UNITED Engineering Industries Co. has decided to cut its production of JIBs by 300,000 units in 1998. The company has decided to cut its production of JIBs by 300,000 units in 1998. The company has decided to cut its production of JIBs by 300,000 units in 1998.

REUTERS The Business

Major Currencies & Commodities

Currency	USD	JPY	GBP
US Dollar	1.0000	1.7500	0.6500
De Mark	0.5663	1.0000	0.3366
GB Sterling	0.6337	1.0000	0.3366
CH Franc	0.8773	1.0000	0.3366
JP Yen	0.0074	1.0000	0.3366
CA Dollar	0.6801	1.0000	0.3366
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0000	0.3366
NL Guilder	0.0012	1.0000	0.3366
FR Franc	0.1664	1.0000	0.3366

Energy

Oil	Last	Review
Brent	14.86	14.91
W. Texas	14.66	14.91
Bonny	14.66	14.91
Dubai	12.28	12.46
U.S. Gas	153.00	153.00

Metal Prices

Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	299.5	300
Silver (oz's)	6.28	6.32
Platinum (oz's)	384.5	385.5
AL (3 Months)	1388	1388
CU (3 Months)	1707	1708
Zinc (3 Months)	1070	1072
Lead (3 Months)	568	569
Ni (3 Months)	4870	4880

Commodity

Commodity	Last
Coffee (c/lbs)	138.92
Cocoa (5/lbs)	1833
Sugar (5/lbs)	263.2
Wheat (5/lbs)	93
Soy (c/lbs)	27.88
Tea (c/lbs)	118
Barley (5/lbs)	0
Rice (5/lbs)	416

JORDAN

D

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Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

High-income households to be excluded from receiving cash subsidies for bread

** THE MINISTRY of Finance has decided to exclude high-income households from the list of beneficiaries from the bread subsidy. The exclusion of those who earn more than 500 per month comes within the efforts being exerted to channel the subsidy to low-income households who deserve it.

This decision follows the streamlining of the system to distribute the subsidies for rice, sugar, milk and bread by the Ministry of Finance which started this year to disburse the cash subsidies, besides that for bread, instead of the Ministry of Supply.

Government sources indicated that the exclusion of high-income households from receiving the bread subsidy was found necessary after an indepth study revealed that it is not possible to pay such a subsidy to those who earn more than JD500 a month. This measure goes in line

with those who were also excluded from receiving cash subsidies for rice, sugar and milk.

The government has been paying each person JD1.280 in cash subsidy for bread and 720 fils for the other basic foodstuffs amount. Those payments cost the government last year a total of around JD77 million out of which JD44 million were for subsidizing bread.

Although no information could be obtained about the number of the people who were excluded from receiving the bread subsidy, preliminary estimates indicate that more than 500,000 persons are excluded from getting food subsidies.

According to some sources, the Ministry of Finance is currently preparing an evaluation study to the streamlining process to identify the extent of success and the methods that can contribute to better implementation (Al Aswaq).

United Engineering Industries minimises loss after cutting production costs, other expenses

** THE UNITED Engineering Industries Corp. recorded a JD676,300 gross profit last year compared to JD635,200 in 1996 but the four per cent increase was not enough to take the firm out of the red. Board chairman Awai Ukkeh told the general assembly that despite reducing production costs and lowering administrative and selling expenses the firm posted a JD414,300 loss compared to a JD753,300 loss in 1996.

Mr. Ukkeh told the shareholders that due to weak local and outside markets, sales declined by 16 per cent from JD4.4 million in 1996 to JD3.7 million in 1997. As to the future plan, the chairman stressed that the firm seeks to raise the utilisation of the available production capacity and to increase cautious and careful sales locally and abroad (Al Aswaq).

Century Investment Group clarifies misunderstanding with workers over bonus

By Ghaila Alul
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A textile factory run by Century Investment Group has settled a misunderstanding with its 850 workers sparked by a promise to give employees a one month bonus salary, a manager said Wednesday.

The firm, taking the cue from His Majesty King Hussein's decision to grant army, police and intelligence personnel a one month bonus salary, announced the move during a tour of its premises earlier this month by Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali.

"However, because the sum required for this grant

was not earmarked in the company's budget, we decided to divide it over a period which will hopefully not exceed two or three months," Century Chairman Omar Salah said in a statement responding to claims by workers in an article published by Al Rai Arabic daily newspaper that the firm has reversed its decision to grant employees a bonus salary.

The newspaper said that workers at the plant established at Irbid's Al Hassan Industrial Estate stopped work for two hours Saturday and that the management threatened to refer them to court.

"These claims have sought to undermine the great success achieved by the group throughout the past two years," said Mr. Salah.

The 850 workers at the textile factory produce 600,000 pieces of men's and women's undergarments monthly for 25 clients such as Victoria's Secret, Gap, Ralph Lauren, Structure and Banana Republic.

Century Group, a public shareholding company with an estimated equity value of \$100 million, employs 1,100 at its factories established in Irbid's Qualifying Industrial Zone (QIZ) — all on a 50/50 partnership with world multinationals.

Mr. Salah said the group is working on increasing the number of workers to 2,000 by the end of this year.

"Since the establishment of Century Investment Group we strove to create a suitable industrial climate that supports Jordan's economy, provide job opportunities for Jordanians as well as find means to export the Jordanian product to American and European markets," Mr. Salah said.

He added that in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Development, the company agreed to provide 100 new job opportunities in Century's factories — manufacturing everything from women underwear and dairy products to textiles and electronics.

"Despite its recent debut in the market, Century provides its workers with addi-

tional privileges such as social security, free transportation, some health benefits as well as a healthy working environment," Mr. Salah said in the statement.

Century Investment Group was behind the designation of Irbid's sprawling Al Hassan Industrial Estate to a QIZ which grants goods produced at the zone free access to U.S. markets without any reciprocal benefits.

The QIZ agreement was signed between Jordan and Israel in the presence of U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright during the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) economic conference in Doha in November.

New strategy in attempts to sell China's debt-ridden firms

BEIJING (AFP) — Chinese leaders are changing tack as attempts to sell debt-laden state enterprises to foreigners founder, but expectations still remain unrealistic, analysts say.

"On the surface, if you have one million dollars in debt, and you are losing five million a year, of course there will be no buyers," said Gary Coull, chairman and chief executive of Credit Lyonnais Securities Asia.

"They need to do more to get these candidates in shape, in order to attract private equity

and investment," Mr. Coull told Agence France Presse on the sidelines of a Beijing conference, at which the pressing need for China to allow even more money-losing firms to go bankrupt became an oft-repeated mantra.

Whether China can weed out such firms in the face of swelling unemployment, which has fueled social unrest, will determine the economic growth rate of the country in the coming years.

It is likely to affect growth rates throughout the region as well, bankers warned.

So far, however, reluctance to put too many people on the street at once has led provincial governments to seek foreign investors game to own a state enterprise for as low as 12 U.S. cents — along with its debts, which can run into tens of millions of dollars.

Even local officials returning from quests for buyers either abroad or in the wealthy coastal provinces, concede the number of takers has not been huge.

"A relatively small number of state enterprises have been sold outright," Zhang

Guoguang, governor of Liaoning province, said in an interview.

In Liaoning, on the first day of a special fair aimed at selling off 600 bankrupt state enterprises for one yuan each (12 cents), only 12 sold, according to Xinhua news agency. After that, local officials refused to give out figures.

Mr. Zhang said the province is no longer focusing on selling such firms outright. Instead, it is encouraging foreign investors to buy a stake, help improve management

and technology, and run them more profitably.

But this may be too optimistic, particularly as buyers are strongly discouraged from firing redundant workers, analysts warned.

"I think there are very unrealistic expectations of the role foreign investment can play in the state-owned enterprises," said Nicholas Lardy, senior fellow at the Brookings Institute, a Washington-based think tank.

"Many of these firms not only have negative cash flow, they are insolvent. In the long term, more firms will need to close," he added.

Another tack authorities are taking is to try to bundle profitable portions of a state enterprise into a new entity, and list it on the Hong Kong market as an H-share to raise money and stay afloat. But only the best of state firms are supposed to list.

Chen Yaonian, vice-chairman of the China Securities Regulatory Commission, said said authorities will press ahead with plans for more state-owned enterprises to list in Hong Kong this year, giving them priority over private firms which may be more profitable.

"Within three years' time, state-owned enterprises (SOEs) must change their structure. So we have to solve this by giving listing priority to flagship industries, large SOEs, and key industries," Mr. Chen told a disgruntled representative of a private firm, who complained it was too hard for non-state firms to win approval to list shares.

Even when state enterprises do list shares, investors are not always eager to pour in money. Ian Beattie, a London-based fund manager with Workinvest Ltd., said many of the shares on offer were in "pretty tough" sectors, such as textiles, pharmaceuticals, or steel.

"Also, I'm not keen on those that get cash on the stock exchange and then simply go on a buying spree in the Hong Kong property market for trophies," he said.

Mr. Beattie said he had attended a presentation in London recently by the mayor of Shenyang, the capital of Liaoning, who touted opportunities to invest in state firms there.

But "the implication seemed to be, 'you can buy the whole company but you can't lay people off,'" Mr. Beattie said. "You can't expect foreigners to buy things and say 'we'll never lay anyone off'."

REUTERS The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.7891	0.6121	1.4764	138.86	1.4490	1744.70	1.9384	6.5380
DE Mark	0.5683	-	0.3457	0.8339	76.82	0.8198	986.10	1.1287	3.3527
GB Sterling	1.6337	2.8895	-	2.4690	221.58	2.3672	2848.44	3.2849	9.5851
CH Franc	0.6773	119.33	0.4148	-	92.11	0.8810	1180.81	135.03	4.0181
JP Yen	0.0074	1.3021	0.4602	1.0864	-	1.0682	12.84	146.88	4.3862
CA Dollar	0.6901	1.2918	0.4225	1.0586	1.07	-	1270.80	1.4551	4.3255
LA Lira	0.0006	1.0134	0.3504	0.8846	1286.01	0.8299	-	11.42	3.3984
IT Lira	0.0012	0.873	0.3066	0.7491	88.81	0.7263	874.44	-	2.9742
ML Guildler	0.0012	0.873	0.3066	0.7491	88.81	0.7263	874.44	-	2.9742
FR Franc	0.1684	0.2591	0.1031	0.2471	22.98	0.2442	33.61	33.6100	-

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7090	3.7505	0.3770	3.5400	0.3060	3.6727	1613.00	3.4140
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	-	5.2898	0.5317	6.1340	0.4316	5.1801	2133.39	4.8152
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1890	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0816	0.98	403.41	0.9103
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8807	9.9488	-	8.66	0.8117	9.74	4013.48	9.0862
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1948	1.0304	1.0304	-	0.0841	1.01	415.66	0.9379
Kuwait Dinar	3.2880	2.3710	12.2565	1.2320	11.90	-	12.00	4844.44	0.9379
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0212	1.0225	0.9811	0.0833	-	411.96	0.9384
Lebanese/1000	0.86	0.4686	2.4788	0.2492	2.4058	0.2022	2.4274	-	2.2864
Egyptian	0.2329	0.2077	1.0886	0.1104	1.0682	0.0886	1.0788	443.16	-

Energy									
Oils	Last	Previous							
Brent	14.66	14.91							
W. Texas	14.86	12.97							
Bonny	14.66	14.91							
Dubai	12.28	12.46							
UL Gas	153.00	153.00							

Metal Prices									
Metal	Bid	Offer							
Gold (oz's)	298.5	300							
Silver (oz's)	5.28	5.32							
Platinum (oz's)	384.5	386.5							
Al (3 Months)	1386	1388							
CU (3 Months)	1707	1709							
Zinc (3 Months)	1070	1072							
Lead (3 Months)	568	568							
NI (3 Months)	4870	4890							

Commodity									
Commodity	Last	Delivery							
Coffee (c/b)	138.82	Spot							
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1933	Spot							
Sugar (\$/ton)	283.2	Spot							
Wheat (\$/ton)	63	Spot							
Soya (c/b)	27.58	Spot							
Tea (\$/kg)	115	Spot							
Barley (\$/bsh)	0	Spot							
Rice (\$/ton)	410	Spot							

JULY Cross Rates		
Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.1493	1.155
DE Mark	0.3974	0.3994
GH Franc	0.4792	0.4816
FR Franc	0.1186	0.1192
JP Yen	0.5153	0.5209
NL Guilder	0.3528	0.3546
IT Lira	0.4031	0.4051

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET

HOUSING BANK CENTRAL BANK - JORDANIAN TELEPHONE: 60711 / 60719

ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 20/05/1998

		TRANS.						JD	
S	355.500	170.000	ARAB BANK	16.4	1.00	39	5810	1162140	
	2.6	1.600	JOR. INDUSTRIAL BK.	13.4	4.17	21	17054	28432	
S	3.540	1.250	BANK OF JORDAN	4.2	1	850	1000	1000	
	1.300	0.880	MID. EAST INV. BK.	63.1	0.00	13	17540	16807	
	2.580	1.000	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	11.1	6.40	9	3990	6463	
VS	6.510	3.130	THE HOUSING BK.	18.8	3.37	148	77158	231744	
	4.180	1.780	JOR. INVEST. BANK	9	0.00	2	2310	4780	
	4.020	1.590	JOR. GULF BANK	4.0	10.29	10	9650	6480	
	6.350	2.400	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	18.9	0.00	15	99408	1993148	
S	3.900	1.450	JOR. INV. FID. BANK	12.5	6.17	3	1827	2959	
	2.350	1.470	JOR. INV. FID. BANK/HSEM	8	0.00	1	100	152	
	1.400	0.800	HEM. AL-SAL. (SECUR.)	4.4	0.00	3	2000	1800	
BANK SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 272.67	CHNG: -0.07	267	1125097	345747		
S	1.350	0.810	ARABIAN SEAS INSUR.	45.0	0.00	1	500	410	
	2.400	1.590	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	6.0	11.63	1	1000	2150	
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 121.75	CHNG: -0.05	2	1500	2560		
S	2.240	1.420	JOR. ECONOMIC PRV.	10.1	5.31	4	2640	8461	
	7.500	2.750	VEHICLE. COMMER. FID.	11.5	4.29	1	1700	4760	
	6.100	3.550	ARAB INVT. BOKLES	15.4	4.00	3	780	3990	
	1.550	0.700	INVT. PORTFOLIO	42.7	0.00	5	4150	4423	
	1.120	0.820	REAL ESTATE INV.	17.2	0.00	1	100	88	
	590	2.300	JORDAN INVT. TRAD.	9	0.00	1	1000	410	
	1.480	1.060	MID. EAST BOKLES	8	0.00	1	1000	1080	
	4.600	2.080	ARAB INVT. INV. EDUC.	10.4	5.21	5	2150	4685	
	1.090	0.900	SARMA EDUCATION	16.2	0.00	4	6000	5560	
	1.630	1.450	UNIFIED CO.	6.6	7.33	12	2500	3750	
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 116.30	CHNG: +0.67	37	22120	34107		
	4.450	2.450	JOR. COMERT. FACT.	14.8	4.42	26	32703	81076	
	11.250	9.270	JOR. PETROLE. REFINERY	10.1	8.59	7	850	1000	
	1.570	1.040	WOOLLEN INDUSTRIES	12.4	6.37	5	1020	1620	
	1.100	0.700	JOR. PETROLE. CO. MGR.	12.4	6.37	5	1000	1200	
	5.740	3.660	ARAB PHARM. IND.	14.8	3.12	29	12500	68102	
	6.800	1.780	JOR. CERAMIC IND.	7.7	5.65	2	1450	2567	
	1.440	1.100	JOR. PAPER MANUF.	9.8	8.47	4	750	885	
	6.350	4.650	DAR ALDIAH AL-KH. INV.	7.7	2	1300	2	7179	
	3.220	2.220	ARAB ALUM. IND.	10.7	9.88	2	200	503	
	4.000	0.910	JOR. INDUS. RESOURCES	0.7	4.12	44	4700	4700	
	1.620	1.080	HEM. CELORON	7.7	7.25	5	2300	3164	
	1.080	0.810	JOR. NIK. CABLE CO.	12.1	11.1	11	8050	13050	
	1.100	1.290	EL-KAY HEAVY WEAR	47.9	0.00	10	8100	11006	
	1.080	1.100	IND. TOBACCO	11.1	5.79	20	9450	11433	
	1.220	0.870	HEM. CO. INV.	2	11.0	3	5775	5775	
	0.800	0.660	JORDAN STEEL	10.0	6.43	51	178950	147835	
+	0.890	0.860	MID. EAST COMPLEX	10.0	0.00	30	28100	15455	

Klinsmann and Matthaus bury the hatchet

HELSINKI (AFP) — Bitter German rivals Jurgen Klinsmann and Lothar Matthaus promised to put their differences behind them on Tuesday and do their best to promote team harmony ahead of next month's World Cup finals.

Housed with the rest of the German squad at a training camp in Helsinki, the two men were called to the room of coach Berti Vogts on Monday evening for a face-to-face talk.

In the past they have waged ugly verbal wars against each other in the press and freely admit they are not friends.

Matthaus' recall to the national side after a 3 1/2-year absence has forced the pair to reconsider their feud.

"I was happy with the atmosphere

of the talk," Vogts said. "Both have achieved their greatest successes together (1990) and were also very successful in their shared times at Inter Milan and Bayern Munich."

Klinsmann said the pair had vowed they would have no further rows.

"In future we have promised ourselves to discuss problems straight away," Klinsmann said. "That way we have the basis for optimal co-operation. There is no problem on my side about Lothar's return to the national side. He has had a fantastic season and deserves his recall."

Noted for his often reckless comments to the press, there is great pressure on 37-year-old Matthaus to be on his best behaviour.

"It's not about Jurgen or me, but

about the whole of German football," he said diplomatically.

"What was in the past is now forgotten. I have learnt from my mistakes. I will accept every decision by the trainer. I want to fit in with the rest of the team."

That will mean playing second fiddle to Olaf Thon if the Schalke defender returns to full fitness in time after tearing ankle ligaments.

Thon is Germany's designated libero in the absence of Matthias Sammer and Matthaus has been recalled as a form of insurance in case more experience in defence is needed.

Matthaus will be competing in his fifth World Cup — a record.

He has 122 caps to his name and will definitely add to that during the Helsinki training camp because

of friendlies against Finland and Colombia.

Matthaus and the rest of the Bayern Munich players did not train with the rest of the squad Monday, their first day away. They were limited to jogging after Sunday's German Cup victory over Duisburg 24 hours earlier.

Matthaus is eager to make up for Germany's disappointment four years ago in the United States, when Bulgaria eliminated them in the quarter-finals.

After such a prolonged absence he is still getting used to the thrill of representing his country again.

"It was a bit strange putting on all the national gear again," the Bayern libero smiled. "But the colours suit me."

Clemente has second chance for World Cup success

PARIS (AFP) — Javier Clemente has another chance to propel Spain, seemingly always the bridesmaid never the bride, to their first World Cup title after years of impressive play but unimpressive results.

Quarter-final spots at both the last World Cup and the European championships could hardly be regarded as failures although, given the quality of the players at his disposal, more was expected by the fans back home.

Clemente's Spain fell to Italy in the United States four years ago and to hosts England at Euro 96. In France next month they will be competing in their sixth World Cup finals.

Clemente will be the first coach to lead Spain at successive World Cup finals and the controversial, chain-smoking coach has possibly his last chance to win honours on the international stage.

Born in the Basque region near Bilbao in 1950, Clemente showed such talent as a young footballer that many expected him to go on to become an all-time great.

Sadly, a bad tackle ended his career, irreparably damaging his knee, and put paid to his ambitions. He elected, instead, to turn his hand to coaching.

Clemente guided Athletic Bilbao to the 1982 and 1983 Spanish League titles before being given his marching orders by the club after a dispute with one of his players.

He had spells at Espanyol and Atletico Madrid before taking over the reins of the national side in September 1992.

Bold off the field, Clemente has been similarly unafraid in his selection policies. He has no qualms about injecting young talent into the side and those he has blooded include Raul, Kiko, Josep Guardiola and Alfonso.



Gabriel Batistuta of Argentina reacts after scoring a goal in the 47th minute against Chile in their friendly match 19 May in Mendoza, Argentina. Argentina defeated Chile, 1-0 (AFP photo)

Hassler can be a key man for Germany

PARIS (AFP) — Thomas Hassler may be one of the Bundesliga's smallest players at just 1.66m, but inside his chest beats a giant heart.

A member of Germany's 1990 World Cup-winning side, Hassler is hungry for one last crack at international glory at France '98.

Fearful for his extraordinary capacity to loop free-kicks over the defensive walls of opposing players, Hassler is a pit-sized engine in the German midfield.

For the first time this decade, though, his place in the German side has been placed in question because of a tactical re-think by coach Berti Vogts.

Vogts is worried that Germany's midfield is too offence-oriented, leaving the defence exposed to quick counter-attacks when Germany lose the ball near goal.

There used to be room for both Hassler and Dortmund's Andreas Moller in the German midfield, but now it looks like being an either-or situation.

Much to Hassler's disap-



pointment, Vogts leaned toward Moller in this year's pre-World Cup friendlies.

Although the Karlsruhe playmaker has said he won't go to the World Cup as a benchwarmer, Vogts will be counting on him to convert his bottled-up frustration into solid football.

After all, it was only one year ago that Vogts went out of his way to lend Hassler his unequivocal support after he suffered two heart-breaking bone breaks in the same leg, the second coming at training just weeks after his recovery from the initial injury.

Such is the former Juventus

and AS Roma midfielder's popularity, the whole nation seemed to commiserate with him.

Hassler is an enormously creative footballer, well-liked by his teammates, who can turn a match around with his creativity and deft ball skills.

Jurgen Klinsmann would never have scored all the goals he has without Hassler feeding him split-second passes from the midfield.

Vogts might, in the end, accept the view that Germany's midfield is big enough to hold both Hassler and Moller.

Tunisia's Beye back to his best

PARIS (AFP) — Zoubair Beye may be the pick of the Tunisia football crop, but he could have missed the World Cup following child-like tantrums during the 1998 African Nations Cup.

Beye was taken off in the opening group match against Ghana after becoming an anonymous figure and when substituted against the Democratic Republic of Congo because of an equally ineffective show, he stormed off.

Dropped for the final pool match with Togo, the diminutive midfielder with German second division club Freiburg was brought on for the second half of the quarter-final with hosts Burkina Faso.

Zoubair, who turns 26 this month, made an immediate impact, sending accurate passes through minute defensive gaps to create scoring chances for strikers starved until his arrival.

This was the old Beye, who first sprang to prominence at the 1996 African Nations Cup in South Africa where no-hopers Tunisia finished second behind the hosts.

Before moving to Freiburg, and joining national team striker Mehdi Ben Slimane, Beye was the midfield pivot of the highly successful Etoile du Sahel club.

He helped Etoile — from the eastern coastal town of Sousse — win the 1995 African Confederation (CAF) Cup and finish runners-up to Kawkab Marrakech of Morocco the following year.

"We could not be in a tougher group," he says of Group G matches against England, Colombia and Romania. "However, we go into the World Cup without any complexes."

World Cup countdown with Franz Beckenbauer

Are you a World Cup expert? Then let me challenge you

What's wrong here?



This sequence of pictures shows one of the most controversial scenes in the entire history of the World Cup. Do you know what it represents? As a little hint, I can tell you I was present at this game and that — sadly — the outcome of this little episode was the reason for one of the biggest disappointments in my life.

Solve the geography question daily to find the phrase at the end of Beckenbauer's World Cup countdown

6) For clockmakers this country is an important one, although in many respects the clocks could be said to run differently here, especially in road traffic.

The country is not even a proper state. Its inhabitants have the reputation of being somewhat old fashioned.

Yet the country has gone through some radical changes in the past twenty years, and fifteen years previously one of the country's port cities produced a unique cultural phenomenon.

At the time people turned up their noses, but the characters involved are today heaped with titles, memorials and other honours.

Drinkers are ordered to stop imbibing at an hour when most other countries are only just starting.

The Royal House can look back on an eventful history, encompassing polygamy, abdication out of love and family rows carried out in the public eye — exciting events in which the common people always took a keen interest.

The monarchy has over the centuries lost much of its good reputation but kept most of its money.

The country can be reached without getting wet feet although it is still separated from other countries by water, one of the reasons for the failure of all

SOLUTION TO THE WORLD CUP COUNTRY CONTEST
The phrase we are looking for offers a rather precise, though harsh definition of an ability considered indispensable in the world of diplomats.

Please fill in the respective letters in the corresponding positions:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13
14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26
27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40
41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50
51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65
66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74

attempts over the centuries to conquer it.

Solution:

Please enter the letters of the country as instructed in the solution squares as follows:

First letter of the country in position 15.

Fourth letter in position 54.

Facts and figures about the participating countries

CAMEROON

475,447 sq km - Capital: Yaounde

Population: 13,277,000 27.9 per sq km

Principal languages: French, English

Annual GNP per capita: US\$ 630.

Participating in World Cup championships:

Owen ready to take on the world

PARIS (AFP) — Michael Owen, the youngest player to be capped by England this century, may have played less than 50 games for Liverpool, but he is seriously being touted as one of the potential stars of the 1998 World Cup finals.

The 18-year-old striker surpassed by 124 days the 32-year record of Manchester United's Duncan Edwards when he played in the 2-0 defeat by Chile at Wembley in February. Owen failed to continue a record which had seen him score at every level he had played for England, but his electric pace and precocious skills lit up an otherwise dismal England performance.

Owen, the son of a former professional footballer, had barely started school when England last reached the finals in Italy in 1990 but his remarkable maturity and outstanding talent has catapulted him to early stardom.

And as far as England manager Glenn Hoddle is concerned: if he's good enough, then he is old enough.

"He's got the right temperament and he's shown no signs that he can't handle it," says Hoddle.

"I'm putting no pressure on the boy. He is in good form, he's been called up by his country but if he doesn't make the World Cup squad

he's got another 10 years of going to World Cups and European Championships.

"I don't want to put that burden on him now. I just want him to go out and express himself as he has done since he started playing football."

Owen began the 1997/98 season as a virtual unknown, but after four months he was installed by the bookmakers as favourite to finish the season as the Premiership's top scorer.

Owen says he has never had anything but total confidence in his ability, but admits to being surprised by the speed of his rise to

fame.

"It's all come so quickly," he said. "At the start of the season I never thought it would happen so soon."

"But I always hoped it would, that I would become an international player, and now I've got to handle it as normally as possible."

"I'm confident in my ability to do well, and I certainly don't think age comes into it — as the manager said, if you're good enough, you're old enough."

TODAY AT	PHILADELPHIA '1' Bruce Willis & Richard Gere ... in THE JACKAL Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	PHILADELPHIA '2' Jim Carry ... in LIAR-LIAR Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	PLAZA The biggest cinema production TITANIC Shows: 12:00, 3:30, 7:00, 10:30 p.m.	CONCORD CONCORD '1' THE RELIC Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 CONCORD '2' ISMAILIA RAYEH GAI-KAMANANA Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	GALLERIA 2 ABDOUN Charlie Sheen ... in SHADOW CONSPIRACY	GALLERIA 1 ABDOUN Denzel Washington & Whitney Houston ... in THE PREACHER'S WIFE & still showing at 8:30 p.m. TITANIC	Hanan Yanes Theatre TEL: 4625155 STARTING APRIL 6TH Don't Laugh Please We're Jordanian Starring Hisham Yanes, Amal Dabbas, Rania Kurdi and the group at 8:30 p.m. For reservations call: 4640155, 4625155
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Sports

Premier champions

By Jared Ayyoub
The Premier League champions will be crowned on Sunday when Manchester United face Liverpool in the final of the FA Cup at Wembley.

The two teams have both won the league this season, with United finishing first and Liverpool second.

The final will be a rematch of the 1996 FA Cup final, which Liverpool won 3-1.

United manager Alex Ferguson said his team was confident of victory.

Liverpool manager Graeme Souness said his team was determined to win.

The match is expected to be a classic, with both teams playing attacking football.

The FA Cup is one of the most prestigious trophies in English football.

Manchester United have won the FA Cup 12 times in their history.

Liverpool have won the FA Cup 6 times in their history.

The final will be broadcast live on television.

Both teams have a strong chance of winning the trophy.

The match is expected to be a high-scoring affair.

The FA Cup is a testament to the skill and talent of English footballers.

Manchester United and Liverpool are both deserving contenders for the trophy.

The final will be a memorable occasion for all football fans.

For more information, contact the FA Cup secretariat.

Premier League soccer championship to resume June 1

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Premier League (PL) soccer championship will resume next month following a month-long recess resulting from a decision by seven clubs to suspend their participation, demanding a review of ticket sale revenues. Jordan Football Association (JFA) spokesman announced Wednesday.

Mohammad Hamdan, the JFA's secretary, said that the decision to resume the PL competitions on June 1 was taken following a meeting between the JFA and representatives of the seven clubs.

Hamdan told a press conference that the clubs withdrew their demand and agreed that the 1997 formula that governs the revenue distribution remains in effect.

The 1997 ticket sales system stipulates that the two clubs playing any match receive 35 per cent of the ticket sale revenues of that particular match, with the remaining eight clubs receiving a similar share and the rest of the revenues going to the JFA.

"That was only a summer cloud which disappeared without causing losses: we hope that it will never reappear," Hamdan said.

A statement issued following the meeting by the two sides quoted Al Faisali soccer club president, Sultan Odwan, who spearheaded the boycott move, as saying that "despite the unjust formula, we agree to resume the

contests provided that the JFA would present a new formula in the coming years."

On April 30, the JFA consequently put the competition on hold after Al Faisali, Kufroum, Al Ramtha, Al Qadissiyeh, Al Hussein, Al Ahli and Al Arabi announced their boycott of the event until their demands were met by the JFA.

They demanded that the 1997 ticket sales system be revoked and suggested that all revenues be distributed equally among the ten PL clubs.

The seven clubs' request followed an agreement reached between the JFA and a consortium of four businessmen, in return for JD300,000, which instigated the new demand by the seven clubs.

But Al Wihdat, PL title holder and whose matches attract the largest number of fans, threatened that any change in the formula would make them reconsider their participation in the PL contest.

Another club, Shabab Al Hussein, sided with the Al Wihdat and said that it does not favour any change in the revenue distribution system. Al Jazireh was the only club to remain neutral in the issue.

Hamdan said the new agreement with the seven clubs will include as well additional amounts for the PL's 10 clubs, which will be deducted from the JFA's share from the contract with the consortium.

He added that the JFA will consult with the 10 clubs to reach a "consensus" among them on a

ticket sales formula that would receive the blessing of all concerned parties. But he added that if any change was approved it "will be applicable only after the conclusion of the 1998 soccer season."

Among the concessions made by the JFA was the abolishment of "dual punishment" regulation for any player that receives a red card in the soccer championships in the country. The regulation stipulated imposing administrative and financial penalties against a club if any of its players commits a "severe mistake" or earns a red card.

"The financial penalty was removed from our list of punishment and if any player commits any mistake he will be the only party to be punished," Hamdan said.

The JFA also agreed that 50 per cent of the revenues levied from the Golden Quartet contests, which pits the top four PL teams against each other, will be given to the participating clubs only, while the rest will go to the remaining clubs and the JFA, he said.

The two sides also agreed that 50 per cent of the revenues received from the television coverage of the PL contests will go to the 10 clubs while the consortium will win the rest, Hamdan said.

In addition to that, any club which wins a national championship will receive rewards for its accomplishments, he added.

Blatter backs South Africa for 2006 World Cup

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — Former Swiss army colonel Sepp Blatter moved his fight for control of world soccer to South Africa on Tuesday and reaffirmed his support for their bid to host the 2006 World Cup.

Blatter, who will face European soccer supremo Lennart Johansson on June 8 in Paris for the presidency of world controlling body FIFA, is on a two-day visit before flying to Kenya.

The FIFA secretary-general, on leave to campaign worldwide, attended a Premier Soccer League awards ceremony and a dinner honouring the national team that competes at the World Cup in France next month.

South Africa entered the race to stage the showcase tournament during the African Nations Cup in Burkina Faso three months ago and Blatter has repeatedly voiced his approval.

Swede Johansson, who stirred a storm here during the 1996 African Nations Cup by racially insulting African officials and not apologising, has been less enthusiastic about an African host.

"Africa would have to be considered if it is ready and can provide the facilities needed to host a World Cup for 32 teams," was his lukewarm response in Burkina Faso when asked if he supported South Africa.

Germany and England also want the host the 2006 World Cup and Argentina and Brazil have hinted at entering the race. Africa and Oceania are the only regions never to be awarded the tournament.

Blatter, whose allies include outgoing president Joao Havelange from Brazil and former French star Michel Platini, told South Africans that more funds would be pumped into the continent should he succeed.

The former amateur footballer also promised to establish a special fund for cash-strapped national associations if elected two days before Brazil face Scotland in the opening World Cup match.

While the African Football Confederation (CAF) officially supports Johansson, many of its 51 members have hinted at voting for Blatter in a secret ballot among almost 200 delegates.

Jordan scores 41 as Bulls dump Pacers to lead 2-0

CHICAGO (AFP) — Another stunning performance by Michael Jordan, his most productive scoring effort of the 1998 playoffs, put the Chicago Bulls two games from the National Basketball Association Finals.

After accepting his award as the NBA's Most Valuable Player, Jordan scored 41 points in a 104-98 triumph over the Indiana Pacers here on Tuesday.

The Bulls took a 2-0 lead in the best-of-seven Eastern Conference final, moving two victories away from the championship series as they seek their sixth title in the past eight years.

"The pressure was on us to win the first two games at home. Now the pressure is on them," Jordan said. "They have to defend home court and they are in a big hole if they lose a game."

Game three is Saturday at Indianapolis. Since beginning their dynasty run in 1991, the Bulls have never lost a playoff series when leading 2-0.

"Indiana doesn't have anything to be desperate about," Bulls coach Phil Jackson said. "They go home having to play with some urgency. I'm sure they are very concerned about the turnovers and their offense."

Scottie Pippen contributed 21 points, six rebounds, five assists and five steals, dominating with defence on Indiana's Mark Jackson. But Jordan made the difference once again.

Jordan ended each of the first three quarters with a buzzer-beater basket to swipe momentum for the Bulls. He also scored eight consecutive Chicago points in the final minutes to stop a late Pacers charge.

"He played a great game. He was the reason they won it," Indiana coach Larry Bird said. "Tough shots for most people are routine for him. He wanted to come out and prove he is the MVP. There's no doubt of that."

Jordan made 13-of-22 shots from the field and 15 of 18 free throws. "I had my rhythm early when no one else did," Jordan said. "We pretty much controlled them defensively and down the stretch we held them off."

Reggie Miller led Indiana with 19 points, while Chris Mullin added 18 for the Pacers, who made 20 turnovers after 26 giveaways in game one. The Bulls, who have scored 53 points off Pacers turnovers,



Michael Jordan (R) of the Chicago Bulls drives to the basket past Reggie Miller (L) of the Indiana Pacers 19 May during the first half of game two of their NBA Eastern Conference finals game at the United Center in Chicago, IL. The Bulls lead the series 1-0 (AFP photo)

made only six.

The Pacers have also struggled from three-point range with Ron Harper guarding Miller tightly and Mullin struggling with pressure defence.

"We have kept that team to very few three-pointers and that is a team that feeds off three-pointers," Jackson said. "That's more important than us making three-pointers."

Bird and Miller lamented referee calls, saying

there was little hope Jordan would be called for violations other rivals might be whistled for.

"He gets helped out on a lot of calls. When you're the MVP of the league, you're going to get those calls," Bird said.

"We know they are going to get all the 'reputation' calls, the disputed calls," Miller said. "We can't get into that. If the referees hear you have that attitude, they will kill you."

"It's not one guy. You're playing a system. The big guy is shaking, helping, bumping. It's like a marathon. He likes running players to death. But he is getting a lot of help."

Jordan remained undecided about future plans when asked if he would like to return next year and win another MVP award. "Let's hope so," Jordan said. "We will have to see what happens this summer."



All Dael (up) of the Iranian national soccer team jumps over Zaco (bottom) of Rome team during their friendly soccer match in Rome, late 19 May 1998, in preparation of Iran participating in the France 98 Soccer World championships. Iran was defeated 1-7 (AFP photo)

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The American Community School Bargain Fair

Friday, May 22, 1998
9:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

ACS's semi-annual bargain fair will be held on the school grounds next to the Royal Automobile Club. We have a large variety of new and used items for sale.

Entrance fee for adults is 500 fils, children free.

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ANSWERS TO WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q. 1 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

AKQ84 ♠ AQ1053 ♣ J42

The bidding has proceeded: SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
Pass Pass 1♣ Pass

What do you bid now?

A - Playing standard methods, your hand just qualifies as a jump to four spades — you must add a point for the doubler club and three for the singleton diamond. If spades are in your arsenal, by all means jump to four diamonds to show a raise to game in spades with good trump support and diamond shortness.

Q. 2 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

42 ♠ K753 ♠ 985 ♠ 454

Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What action do you take?

A - Only a solid would permit partner to struggle in one no trump with a five-card major and a hand which might be trickless. Convert to two hearts, either directly or via a transfer bid if you use them. Your hand rates to produce a few tricks in a suit contract.

Q. 3 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

AJ752 ♣ J ♣ 985 ♠ KQ6

Partner opens the bidding with one spade. What do you respond?

A - With a hand that has little in the way of defense, five-card support for partner's major and a singleton, don't make it easy for the opponents to get into the auction. Jump to four spades and let them worry about what to do.

Q. 4 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKQ105 ♠ KQ84 ♠ K105 ♠ 4

Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you bid now?

A - It is tempting to jump to three spades, the five-card major with 100 honors. But that will almost certainly lose the heart suit, which could be the right strain for a slam since partner will surely be able to get discards on your spades. Start by bidding two clubs (Slamman) to check on whether partner has a four-card major.

Q. 5 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

4J552 ♠ Q53 ♠ J62 ♠ AK9

The bidding has proceeded: SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
Pass Pass 1♣ Pass

What do you bid now?

A - Regardless of whether you play four- or five-card majors, raise to two hearts now. Should you bid one spade and partner rebids, say, two clubs, you would feel guilty if you simply took a preference to two hearts. That action will often be predicated on a low doubler in partner's suit for lack of anything better to do.

Q. 6 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKQ105 ♠ KQ84 ♠ K105 ♠ 4

The bidding has proceeded: SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
Pass Pass 1♣ Pass

What do you respond?

A - It is standard practice to respond with four-card suits up-the-line when you have a sound response. Therefore, there is no need here to bypass the diamond suit in favor of bidding hearts, especially since you have no trumps to protect. Bid one diamond.

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Albright calls on embattled leader to step down

Parliament speaker says Suharto has until Friday to resign — student leader

Combined agency dispatches

U.S. SECRETARY of State Madeleine Albright called Wednesday on President Suharto of Indonesia to "preserve his legacy" by stepping down and permitting a transition to democracy.

In a speech at graduation ceremony at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut, Ms. Albright increased pressure on Mr. Suharto, with whom U.S. administrations have had little dispute during his 32 years in power.

She said of Mr. Suharto: "Now he has an opportunity for an historic act of statesmanship" by stepping down.

By stepping down, Ms. Albright said in a prepared speech, Mr. Suharto would "preserve his legacy as a man who not only led his country but provided for its democratic transition."

Also, Ms. Albright urged Mr. Suharto to exercise restraint in dealing with millions of demonstrators throughout the Southeast Asian country seeking his ouster.

A senior U.S. official said while Ms. Albright did not directly call for Mr. Suharto's resignation, that was the point of her statement.

"President Suharto's recognition that wide-ranging political reform is necessary is long overdue," U.S. State Department spokesman James Rubin said Tuesday.

The Clinton administration was hopeful that Mr. Suharto's words would lead to a genuine dialogue as quickly as possible, Mr. Rubin said.

Indonesian Parliament Speaker Hamkoko has given President Suharto a Friday deadline to resign, a student leader who met with the speaker, and a member of Mr. Hamkoko's staff, said Wednesday.

"Hamkoko gave the president until Friday," the student leader, Sardin, told journalists and students here.

"If by that time no reply is given, the leadership of the parliament will on Monday instruct the heads of the [political] factions, a student leader who met with the speaker, and a member of Mr. Hamkoko's staff, said Wednesday.

Mr. Sardin was speaking after a delegation of students, representing various universities present at a 12,000-strong parliament protest sit-in Wednesday, had met with Mr. Hamkoko.

The announcement was greeted by a storm of applause and cheers by the students who are demanding Mr. Suharto's immediate resignation, spurring an earlier pledge by the 76-year-old leader for new elections, in which he would not run, as inadequate.

It capped the third day of the sit-in of the parliament building, and a week of protests and violence which have left 500 dead and forced tens of thousands of foreigners to flee the country.

Mr. Sardin said Mr. Hamkoko had given the president the deadline while meeting him to convey

Opposition leader voices many's fear: another Tiananmen Square

By Jocelyn Gecker
Associated Press

JAKARTA — Menacing tanks, pro-democracy students and a hard-line regime: for some, the parallels between Jakarta 1998 and the days before the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing are uncomfortably close.

On Wednesday, Indonesian opposition leader Amien Rais voiced what many had been fearing when he cancelled a huge demonstration against Indonesian President Suharto.

Mr. Rais quoted an army general as saying he "doesn't care at all" if another Tiananmen Massacre occurs in the Indonesian capital.

"I was so shocked hearing this kind of determination, this, I think, irresponsible decision," Mr. Rais

said. "That opinion was jointly agreed. If there is no certainty [in Mr. Suharto's answer] it will be a deadlock. But there is a way out, and that is a special meeting of the MPR."

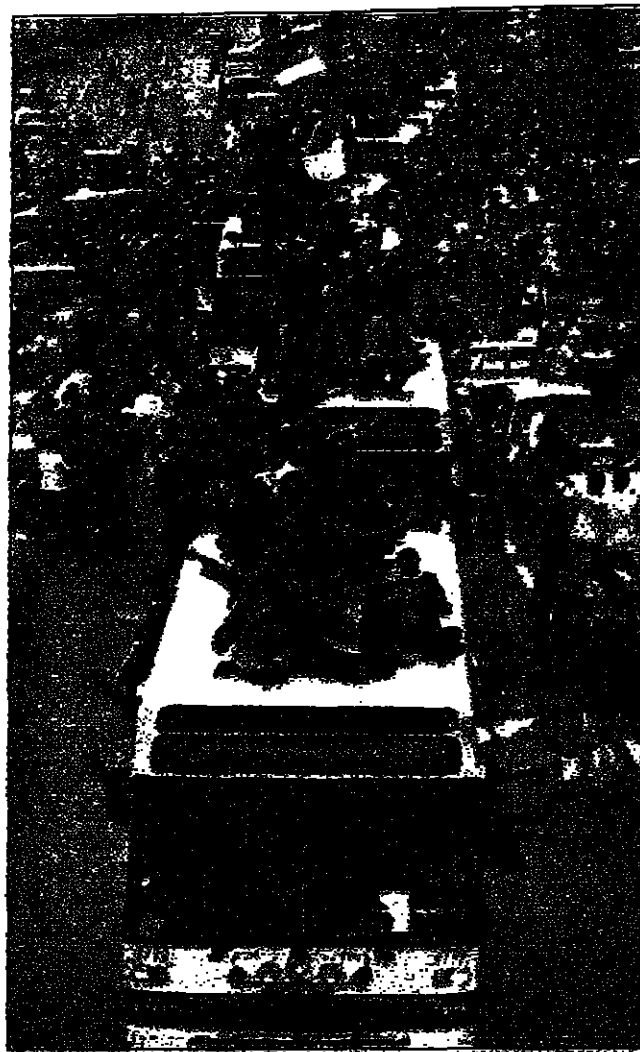
The same parliamentary source said Mr. Hamkoko, who was accompanied by his deputies including representatives from the armed forces who sit in parliament, and the ruling Golkar Party, had met with 38 student leaders. On Monday Mr. Hamkoko said that he and his deputies had agreed to call on Mr. Suharto to step down "in a wise and sage way" for the sake of the country's unity.

But military chief and Indonesian Defence Minister General Wiranto quickly quashed the statement, saying it represented Mr. Hamkoko's individual opinion, and was unconstitutional.

Golkar's parliamentary faction chief, Irad Sudiro, told the press Wednesday that he had sent his faction's five alternative ways out of the current deadlock to party headquarters.

Four of the five alternatives required the president to resign and a special meeting of the MPR, he said. The fifth alternative was to accept Mr. Suharto's proposal for fresh elections in which he would not be a candidate, and his reform programme.

Students ride on top of a bus waving the Indonesian flag and shouting slogans near Parliament in Jakarta Wednesday. Since Monday tens of thousands of students have occupied the legislature in an exultant protest against the 32-year rule of Indonesian President Suharto (AP photo)



Students ride on top of a bus waving the Indonesian flag and shouting slogans near Parliament in Jakarta Wednesday. Since Monday tens of thousands of students have occupied the legislature in an exultant protest against the 32-year rule of Indonesian President Suharto (AP photo)

Netanyahu's adviser under fire for remarks on Sara, Dayan and rabbis

T.V. commentator: Bar Illan's post in hands of Sara

TEL AVIV (AP) — The Israeli prime minister's wife is reportedly fuming, rabbis are grumbling, and the daughter of Israel's most famous war hero has demanded an immediate resignation.

Benjamin Netanyahu's media-watcher and closest adviser, David Bar-Illan, is the focus of a scandal over some injudicious remarks he allegedly made to the New Yorker magazine.

Of Sara Netanyahu, subject of tabloid interest after she fired her nanny for burning a pot of soup and upbraided household servants, Mr. Bar-Illan supposedly said: "Sara is not the most stable woman in the world... Now she only appears at the appropriate things, receptions for children, things for the retarded or the disadvantaged. And it works. It's OK. Finally it's become boring to Israelis. Had she run half-naked through the streets, it might have been something else, but it's under control."

In arguing that Mr. Netanyahu had made a mistake apologising on national television for sexual peccadilloes, Mr. Bar-Illan said

Israelis had tolerated much from their leaders and cited Moshe Dayan, the patch-eyed former general and war hero, saying he had "screwed half the women in the army."

Yael Dayan, daughter of the former defence minister, took umbrage and demanded Mr. Bar-Illan's resignation. "I would like an apology and a disciplinary hearing. In simple terms, I want him thrown out," she said on Israel TV.

The daily Maariv cited Sara Netanyahu's "growing rage." It also noted that Israeli rabbis were angry with Mr. Bar-Illan for allegedly suggesting no opprobrium would be attached to having an affair with a "shiksa," a derogatory Yiddish word for non-Jewish woman, because "even the rabbis [babbles] do it."

A former editor of the Jerusalem Post and a pianist with an international reputation, Mr. Bar-Illan denied he made any such comments. He said on Israel Radio that the writer had asked if Mrs. Netanyahu was unstable. "I said: Drop this nonsense, because it is simply untrue."

New Yorker writer David Remnick, a Pulitzer Prize winner, said he had not taped the talk with Mr. Bar-Illan but had detailed notes and stuck by his quotations. "I take accurate notes," he said.

Coming to Mr. Bar-Illan's defence was Shai Bazak, Mr. Netanyahu's spokesman, who went on television to say he believed Mr. Bar-Illan's denials and said the article had "slandered" the Israeli prime minister.

A Maariv telephone poll of 500 Israelis, with a margin of error of 4.5 per cent, found that 46 per cent of those contacted believed the New Yorker and 32 per cent believed Mr. Bar-Illan.

Emmanuel Rosen, a television commentator for Israel TV's Channel 2, said Mr. Netanyahu was likely to try and keep his friend by his side but that Mr. Bar-Illan's future ultimately remained in Sara Netanyahu's hands.

"If it was only up to Netanyahu, I imagine he would let this pass... but things are not only up to him, they are dependent primarily on Sara Netanyahu."

King Fahd commutes sentence of British nurses

RIYADH (Agencies) — Two British nurses jailed for the murder of an Australian colleague could be released later Wednesday now that the Saudi king has commuted their sentences, officials said.

British consul Simon Lovett met the nurses in prison in the eastern city of Dammam, where he has gone to arrange for their travel and to help them obtain exit documents, a British embassy spokesman said.

Deborah Parry, 39, and Lucille McLauchlan, 32, have been imprisoned in the Dammam central prison since their arrest in 1996 for the murder of Yvonne Gilford, 55.

"I'm optimistic their release is imminent," Salah Al Hejailan, a lawyer for the nurses, said. "I know their families are hoping they will leave tonight," he said.

A police source in Dammam also said the women could be released later Wednesday, as soon as the police department receives the commutation document.

The Saudi ambassador to Britain, Ghazi Algosabi, announced Tuesday that King Fahd has commuted their sentences to time served and ordered them released in response to a petition from the women's families.

Mr. Al Hejailan hailed the decision as "a shining aspect of Islamic justice."

British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who has appealed to King Fahd about the nurses, called it "a generous humanitarian act."

Gilford's friends condemned the Saudi action, saying it is the result of political pressure.

"I don't know how Tony Blair can

sleep at night," said Penny Stack, a 39-year-old Briton who once worked with Gilford in South Africa.

Parry was convicted by a Saudi court in August 1997 of fatally stabbing Gilford, and was sentenced to death. McLauchlan was found guilty of being an accessory and sentenced in September to eight years in prison and 500 lashes. The lashes have not been carried out.

Parry escaped beheading when Gilford's brother, Frank, waived his right under Islamic law to demand the death

penalty in exchange for money. He declined to comment Tuesday on the release of the nurses.

Parry and McLauchlan initially confessed to the murder after their arrests, but later recanted, saying their confessions were obtained through physical and sexual abuse by interrogators.

The Australian Associated Press reported that the two nurses planned to publish a diary of the sexual abuse and mistreatment they claim to have suffered in the hands of their Saudi jailers.

It also quoted a public relations firm as saying that the families of both women were negotiating media deals for the story.

Lawyers for the Gilford family threatened court action Wednesday over blood

money promised by the accused killers.

Frank Gilford, of Jamestown near Adelaide, originally refused pleas by their lawyers to spare the women from the death penalty, but later agreed to accept a negotiated settlement of \$1.1 million from them.

Mr. Gilford refused Wednesday to comment on the announcement that the British nurses were about to be released, but said they should honour their agreement to pay the money.

"I don't see it as blood money," he told reporters. "But I think they should honour their agreement."

Mr. Gilford's Adelaide lawyer Michael Abbott said the money had not been paid and his client now expected immediate settlement.

"The last excuse they had for delaying payment has now vanished," Mr. Abbott told ABC Radio.

"I wouldn't expect to have to go to court for them to do, for once, the right thing. But, if we have to go to court, we'll go to court."

The nurses' Saudi lawyer, Salah Al Hejailan, told commercial television here that the bid by the women for a pardon had been helped by the Gilford family's decision to waive its right to demand the death penalty in lieu of blood money.

"I repeat blood money, not compensation, as they said," he said, adding that the money had been raised and was now in a bank account.

"I intend to proportionally release it when they announce that they take it as blood money — which is the concept in our system — but not as compensation."

U.N. weapons inspectors resume search for Iraqi missile warheads

Combined agency dispatches

U.N. ARMS monitors have resumed their search for warheads filled with biological and chemical agents that Iraq claims to have destroyed and buried in 1991, the top U.N. weapons official in Baghdad said Wednesday.

Nils Carlstrom, a former Swedish major general, said some 20 missile experts with advance survey equipment are trying to unearth the missile parts for analysis.

The experts will use metal detectors and will wear gas masks and protective suits in case any of the warheads still contain toxic agents.

Iraqi officials have said a total of 77 warheads were filled with biological and chemical agents and that the United Nations has accounted for all but seven of them.

Iraqi officials say debris from the seven warheads is in the area where the excavations are taking place.

Mr. Carlstrom would not give any information on the number of warheads in dispute.

The digs are taking place at vast sites outside the Iraqi capital, Mr. Carlstrom said.

"Advanced equipment is needed to identify the spot where the warheads are buried," he told the Associated Press.

It is the second time that U.N. arms experts are investigating the sites.

A month-long search which ended on March 12 failed to locate the warheads.

In Dubai, Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz said Wednesday that his country refuses to bow to the United States and sacrifice its independence for the sake of lifting the U.N. sanctions in force since 1990.

"We could bow to the U.S. conditions if we wanted to secure a lifting of the embargo, but we reject the hegemony of the United States," he told Al Khaleej newspaper in the United Arab Emirates.

"The United States refuses to have relations based on independence, sovereignty and common interests with any country, including the big powers," said Mr. Aziz.

But the deputy premier did not rule out negotiations with U.S. oil companies.

Iraq "is not refusing to hold discussions with American oil companies on the basis of independence, the same way as we deal with French, Russian or Chinese firms," he said.

But "it would be stupid to think that dealing with U.S. companies would lead to a lifting of the embargo," said Mr. Aziz.

In Baghdad, Iraqi Trade Minister Mohammad Mahdi Saleh said as he received a Chinese trade delegation, Wednesday that Iraq plans to boost trade with China within the next few months.

"Our trade cooperation will increase during the fourth phase of the oil-for-food programme," which begins in June, Mr. Saleh, who was cited by the official INA news agency, said trade with China, will be diversified and encompass several fields.

The Chinese delegation, which arrived in Iraq Monday, is headed by Li Yan, of the Chinese foreign trade ministry's department of South Asia/Africa.

Hizbollah favours reinforcement of U.N. observer force in S. Lebanon

BEIRUT (AFP) — A top official of Lebanon's Hizbollah movement said in an interview published Wednesday that he favoured reinforcing the U.N. observer force in south Lebanon to facilitate an Israeli withdrawal.

The secretary general of the Shiite Hizbollah, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, told the Arabic daily Al Hayat that strengthening the U.N. force would help Beirut deploy its forces to the Israeli border as part of any Israeli pullback.

"Reinforcement of the U.N. blue helmets [observers], whose mandate is to assist the Lebanese army deploy to the border [with Israel], and setting this deployment in motion in coordination with the United Nations, would be the best formula for applying [U.N. Security Council] Resolution 425," Sheikh Nasrallah said.

Some 5,000 U.N. troops are currently deployed in south Lebanon in accordance with the 20-year-old U.N. resolution, which calls for the immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon.

The current mandate of the U.N. force, which is renewed every six months, runs through the beginning of July. Sheikh Nasrallah, whose Hizbollah spearheads armed efforts to evict Israeli troops from south Lebanon, also said that "nobody will accept that the Lebanese army commits itself to guaranteeing the security of Israel's borders."

Israel last month accepted Resolution 425 on condition that Beirut guarantees the security of its northern border with Lebanon following any Israeli withdrawal.

Beirut and Damascus, the main powerbroker in Lebanon, have rejected the Israeli offer, saying the U.N. resolution calls for withdrawal without conditions.

The Hizbollah leader refused to say what his group's strategy would be following an Israeli pullback.

"Fighting could stop at the

frontier, or not. We will not show our cards," he said in the interview.

He said that the group is holding its own discussions on future strategy, including "whether the goal of the resistance [to Israel] is to liberate Lebanese territory or whether it goes beyond that."

He added: "The Palestinian cause concerns us, but [whether or not] our assistance will be limited to [political] support it is now too early to say."

Sheikh Nasrallah also said that he is "not opposed" to the Palestinian group Hamas training "refugees in Palestinian camps in Lebanon to form combat units" which would fight in the occupied Palestinian territories.

But he said that presently "there is no military cooperation" between Hamas and Hizbollah "because there is no need."

Mandela's autobiography to be brought to screen

CANNES (AFP) — The autobiography of South African President Nelson Mandela, "Long Walk to Freedom," is to be brought to the screen.

Indian Shekhar Kapur is directing the movie, which will be produced by London/Durban-based producer Anand Singh who revealed a budget of up to \$50 million. Kapur, director of the well-received "Bandit Queen," has already travelled to South Africa with screenwriter William Nicholson for research into the president's career, and hopes to begin shooting in August for an October 1999 release. He said he had been scared to take on the project but would "try to make this film as if I were an African."

Baldwin in court on cocaine charges

NEW YORK (AFP) — U.S. actor Daniel Baldwin appeared in court in Manhattan on cocaine charges, court sources said. Baldwin did not enter a plea in the case and is free on \$1,000 bail, the sources said. The 37-year-old actor, whose brothers Alec, Billy and Stephen also star on the silver screen, was arrested Feb. 2 after wrecking a room at New York's Plaza Hotel in a cocaine-fuelled rage, police said. Baldwin could get up to a year in prison. His next court appearance is set for June 15.

Depardieu crashes motorbike

VERSAILLES (AP) — French actor Gerard Depardieu was treated for minor facial injuries Monday after crashing his motorbike, police said. Depardieu, currently filming the movie "Asterix," directed by Claude Zidi, lost control of his motorbike on a highway in Clairefontaine-en-Yvelines, west of Paris, a police spokesman said. The spokesman, who requested anonymity, said the actor was treated mainly for scratches.

Barbie lawsuit dismissed

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A federal judge has dismissed a lawsuit brought by the toy maker Mattel Inc. against MCA Records over the dance pop-group Aqua's top 10 hit "Barbie Girl," an MCA spokesperson said. U.S. District Judge William Matthew Byrne Jr. dismissed all claims, including a countersuit. Mattel claimed it did not give MCA permission to use the name of its top-selling toy. Byrne had previously rejected a version of the lawsuit that asked for all copies of "Barbie Girl" compact discs and videos from store. He said the song was a parody.

'Don't pet the jaguar — he might eat you'

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — There was an ark, a world about to end and a lot of animals for shooting of the most difficult two-day scene for the film "Deep Impact," in which a meteor hits Earth. "We have lions, jaguars, hyenas, alligators, pythons, kangaroos, ostriches, buffaloes, camels, elephants, zebras, cattle, chickens, birds, and we started with two rabbits," says animal coordinator Jules Sylvester. She had to wrangle with 200 animals for a scene when the world is about to end. "We had about 1,000 extras along with the animals, and I found myself saying, 'Excuse me ma'am could you please not pet the jaguar since he tends to want to eat you.'"

Israeli air raid in Lebanon

BEIRUT (AFP) — A Hizbollah militant was wounded on Friday, bringing a deadly guerrilla onslaught in southern Lebanon to a brief respite, hospital sources said. The militant was also wounded in a separate attack on a Hizbollah camp in the Bekaa valley. The air strikes came as the air force of the Lebanese state, self-declared "secular," sought to end the conflict between Shiite Muslim Hizbollah and the army. An Israeli army spokesman said an Israeli fighter jet was shot down and a pilot was killed and another wounded.

Volume 23 Number 684

Arafat Netanyahu

Combined agency dispatches

PALESTINIAN PRESIDENT Yasser Arafat will ask an Arab League meeting in Cairo next week for an Arab summit to revive peace negotiations in the Middle East.

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